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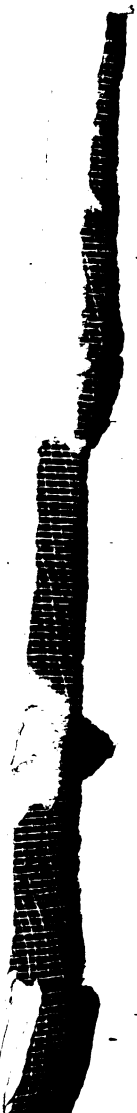
THE
ILLUSTRIOUS
O'HAGAN



JUSTIN HUNTLY McARDATH



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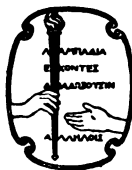
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THE
ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

BY
JUSTIN HUNTLY McCARTHY

AUTHOR OF
"IF I WERE KING" "THE PROUD PRINCE"
"THE LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE" ETC.



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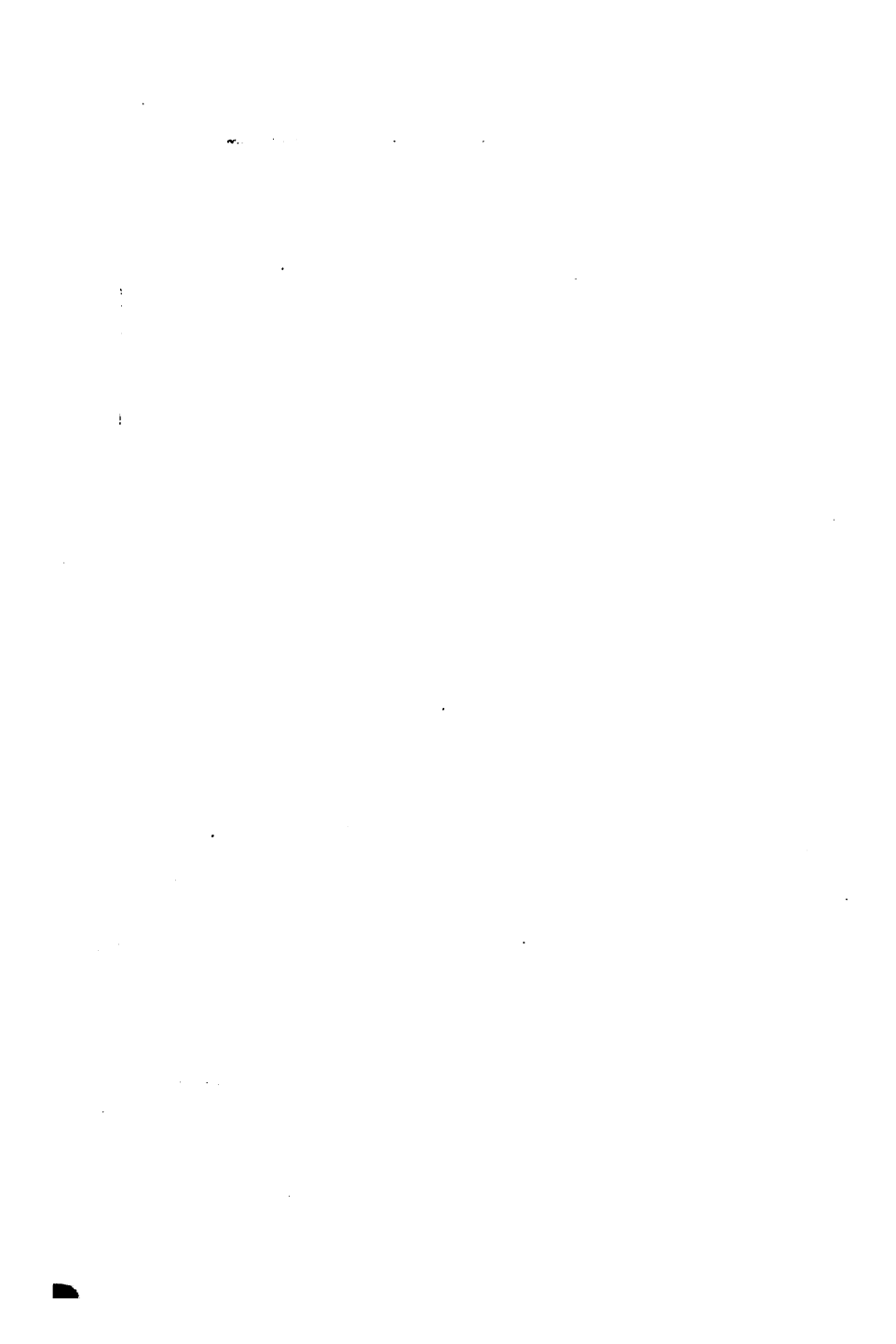
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TO
MY DEAR FATHER



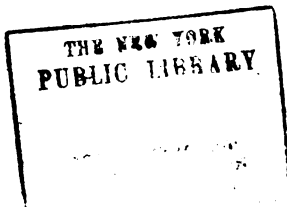
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THE
ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN



THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

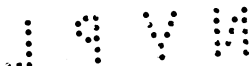
I

THE TWIN BRETHERN

IT is written in the history of the O'Hagans of Killacurry, in the county of Cork, in the province of Munster, in the island of Ireland, that family resemblance was characteristic of the race. Son was ever like sire and daughter like dame when the sire or the dame was a slip from the standard of the O'Hagans of Killacurry. The particular O'Hagan who founded the Killacurry dynasty is lost in the mists of tradition; an Irish king, indeed, but moving dimly through a fine confusion of Firbolgs and Tuatha de Danaan. Whoever he was, he must have been a goodly man, and a stalwart and a dominant, so to persist, through the generations, in setting the seal of his lineaments upon the children of his line. His black hair and his blue eyes, his height of forehead and his pride of chin, appeared again and again through the centuries. At first the evidence for this is no

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

more than the faithful tradition of unpictorial ages, but later the thing is testified to, for the confounding of the incredulous, by the portraits of the O'Hagans, male and female, that adorned the walls of Killacurry, or that shone here and there, where the adventure of the blood had borne their originals, in palaces or castles of Flanders, France, and Spain. But the greatest marvel in this matter of family likeness had its dawn in the dusk of the seventeenth century, when Madame Joan O'Hagan (*née* O'Rourke), the much-beloved spouse of the reigning O'Hagan of the day, Domenick the Dare-Devil, was brought to bed with twins. Fine babies both, they were baptized John and Philip, and when they emerged from that age in which all babies may be said to resemble one another, at least to alien spectators, it was found that each of the pair had inherited the O'Hagan face to an amazing and precisely similar degree. Never did twins resemble each other more closely than did the twin O'Hagan babies, the twin O'Hagan boys, the twin O'Hagan youths, the twin O'Hagan men. Let it be believed that the fabled pair of Ephesus and Syracuse were not more faithful copies. Madame O'Hagan pretended occasionally, a gentle impostor, that she could not tell the brethren apart; but this was not true, and no more than delicate deceit aired to heighten the general effect of the marvel. But The O'Hagan, jolly Domenick, was often as much puzzled by the resemblances between son John and son Philip as any outsider could be, and as every outsider was.



THE TWIN BRETHERN

But the business of this history is not with Domenick O'Hagan, nor with Madam Joan his wife, gallant Irish gentleman and gracious Irish gentlewoman, nor with the childhood of their duplicated heirs. Take for granted the patent fact, not at all uncommon in the history of twins, male or female, but instanced for the first time in the annals of the O'Hagans of Killacurry, that two brothers existed so amazingly alike in every outward form and feature, that no study of such form and feature was of much service in enabling stranger or familiar to tell John from Philip or Philip from John.

There was little more than outward resemblance between the twins. Both proved to be brave in an age of brave men. Both were strong, dexterous, and ambidexterous, as became sons of Domenick the Dare-Devil, and both were healthy as became sons of Joan his wife. But the natures of the pair were as different as the natures of father and mother. John took after Domenick, Philip after Joan. John was of a rollicking, riotous disposition, jovial, mettlesome, amorous, sanguine, a general lover, a general fighter, his own most inveterate enemy. Rabelais would have rejoiced in John as John would have rejoiced in Rabelais, if he ever read a book. This, indeed, he never did, for while the family fortunes still flared, he was too hot a hunter of all things huntable, too florid a lover when the quarry was cornered, too jolly a pot-companion, too rabid a gambler, to have heed of, or need of, other books than those men call

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the devil's. It was all kissing-time, drinking-time, singing-time, tripping-time with him. He could never squeeze a moment from his ease for poring over the infrequent tomes in his father's lean library.

Now in much of this Philip was as different as you please. Philip was the mother's child. He had a love for sport; that was in the blood; he was an Irish gentleman and could not help it. So he drank and danced and gambled cheerfully at each deed's season, and lost, no doubt, what he could not lose again, as soon as ever his brother did. But in his soul he was something of a solitary, and the dying century found him something of a solitary still, a man well over thirty who had never really loved. Unless that were indeed love, that idyl of his youth which had happened so long ago, but which now lived so vividly in his memory, thanks to the open letter in his hand.

II

A GIRL IN A GARDEN

THE letter came from a woman he did not know, from a woman he had never heard of. It found him in his lodgings in Paris, and it carried him far away from Paris to a little German town and a little German palace. The little German palace was very like a palace in a fairy tale. It had a moat, and there were lily-cups on the water, with swans swimming among them, and it had a park. In the park were stately avenues of trees and great gardens formally French, but very pleasant for children to play in, with their boscages and fountains, their statues and bustos. It was very romantic, too, when one of the children was an Irish lad of nineteen, with a humming head, a thumping heart, and his sword for his fortune, and the other was a yellow-haired lass of twelve, with blue eyes of ineffable candor, who was also the high and well-born lady, the only daughter of the petty sovereign of the petty principality.

An abyss of dignity lay between the playmates. Though the O'Hagans had been kings once upon a time, royal crowns had fallen from their foreheads, and royal mantles had dropped from their shoulders

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

long before the days of Domenick the Dare-Devil, while the little princess's amiable parent was ruler in his own right of his nursery garden of a duchy, and carried quarterings on his shield that would have turned the wits of an English herald. Still, there was one thing in common about the fortunes of the two children, and that was their plentiful lack of fortune. If Philip had not a penny beyond his attenuated pay and his rare gains at the gaming-table, the jolly duke was no more than a golden, or silver-gilt, pauper, who found it hard enough to rub along from day to day and keep up some show of dignity, and keep up some show of cheer.

A common poverty could not, however, span the chasm of dignity. Madam Joan O'Hagan would, no doubt, have thought that any son of hers, rich in the blood of the O'Hagans and O'Rourkes, was a right proper match for the daughter of any High Dutch duke in all Germany. It is possible that in his heart Philip might have agreed with her, but in his brain he was well aware that no such opinion would receive the indorsement of the easy-going lord of the easy-going state who had such a slim, sweet slip of a girl for his daughter.

But, indeed, such questions did not vex that childish idyl. The jolly duke and the honest duchess saw no harm in the friendship between the slender strippling who made such a comely page and their dainty, capricious daughter. Golden-haired Dorothea was often hard to please, but she took a fancy to the

A GIRL IN A GARDEN

youth from over-seas who spoke French so well, though with such a soft, warm accent; and the affable parents were content enough in the pleasure of their petulant, imperious daughter, so the fantastic friendship throve.

It was a garden friendship, lived in the open through a splendid spring, a splendid summer, and the best of a splendid autumn. At first they played games together, the simple games that have delighted childhood from the dawn, and Philip, the brisk page, condescended to play hide-and-seek, touch, and battledore and shuttlecock with his lissome, impertinent princess and mistress, as Mars might have condescended to wind silks for Venus. In a palace where a young page had no serious duties such sportings might well fall within the scope of his office, if a Bacchic duke and a tranquil duchess were willing to have an impish piece of girl-mischief taken somewhat off their hands.

But as the lad that was nigh to manhood fell under the spell of the lass with her quaint precocity of womanhood the games changed their nature. They became romances, dramas, epics, evolved from Philip's hot head that had the Gaelic, and brimmed with memories of Celtic tales. And these romances, dramas, epics, were interpreted by the boy and the girl, in the joy of their hearts, in the sunlight and the shadow of those happy gardens, through all those happy months, while the plump duchess dozed over her knitting, and the plump duke drank Rhenish deeply, aped the

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

scholar in his library, played the virtuoso in his ridiculous museum, and paid visits, none too furtive, to the lady-in-waiting he was, for the time, pleased to favor.

What a queer little world it was, as Philip looked back upon it now, over the highway of the years! It did not seem queer to him then, for the world to him was the company of that raw, green girl for whom he held a love as green and raw, for whom he taxed his store of peasant tales to please her whimsies. All the old Irish legends, heard by him at many firesides, took new life in that trim German garden for the sport of boy and girl. Grania put her love-law upon Diarmid, and then Philip and Dorothea would fly for their lives and their loves through the alleys of the little sham Versailles, and hear Finn winding his horn behind them, and the baying of his mighty hounds. Or Cuhulin would woo his lady and do terrible deeds for her sake, the white-and-gold child standing upon a marble seat and clapping her hands as the armies of Queen Maeve faded before the fall of Cuhulin's unconquerable sword.

Something of the spirit of the age came over the great tales as Philip and Dorothea acted them out together. The heroes of the Red Branch fought with small swords, and shook magnificent periwigs when they nodded their august heads. The wonderful women of the West, Children of the Mist, and kindred of mysterious gods, fluttered, in the fancy of the players, the suave air with fans, and fled

A GIRL IN A GARDEN

through haunted forests on high heels and in brocaded gowns. But the heart of the romance was there for the boy and for the girl, and Philip, masquerading as some hero that was himself translated to a figure in a masquerade, was only Philip squeezing from an unripe heart the wine of his worship for a golden, precocious, exquisite girl.

By-and-by the sport changed to an earnest scarcely less unreal than the play, and unconsciously in their pastime they rehearsed their parts in the mystery-piece of love. It was all very sweet, and all very pure, and all very long ago. He saw dimly as in a faded picture the form of that buoyant youth whom the sad destiny of his land had driven into exile, and whom chance and the patronage of foreign friends had set for a season in the service of that little sleepy, slipshod, out-at-elbows duchy. He saw the girl far more distinctly, yellow-haired and blue-eyed, white-robed, high-spirited, possibilities of fierce passions masked by the mould of her youth. When they kissed in all innocence he remembered now with a thrill how she sheltered in his arms, and how he, at her touch, felt his house of flesh tremble, vexed with unappreciable flames. Boy and girl they loved each other, boyishly, girlishly, but behind the very simplicity of their immature and unrealized passion there lurked the dim images of imperious desires, of unacknowledged longings. Dear Heaven, how the world had changed since then!

III

“IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE”

AS Philip sat now with the letter in his hand his eyes through the open window looked upon the Seine and beheld in hard fact the crawling boats and the crowds upon the banks. But he was unconscious of these things; his liberated spirit strayed in that fair garden, so very green in its grass, so very golden in its sunlight, so very black in its shadows. She held him by the hand, commanding, and they babbled as they went, babble half-childish, half-wise, for the truth of the world was with them in their play and his heart ached and glowed with the sweet, fierce purity of a boy's love for a child.

He lifted the letter to look at it again. It had been left at his lodgings that afternoon by a man, a stranger to Philip's servant Teague, who simply said that he had been intrusted to deliver it by the writer, and having said so much went away with no more words. The letter was in a woman's hand, fine, delicate, and firm. It was addressed to Captain Philip O'Hagan, of the Irish Brigade in Paris, and it was sealed with a heart in a border bearing the legend, "Tout pour amitié." It was dated a fortnight earlier

“IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE”

from the Electoral Palace of Schlafingen. It ran thus:

“If Philip O’Hagan cherishes any tenderness for the time when he played as a child with a child in the gardens of Sonnenburg, and if that tenderness has the strength to serve a woman who needs loyal service, there is work for a brave man in Schlafingen.”

The letter was signed Swanhild von Eltze, a name that he had never heard before, a name that carried with it no association of any kind to his mind. But the writer was a magician who had brought back to him his youth, and his young love, and his idol Dorothea. What had happened to her in all those years? He had never seen her since the afternoon, fifteen years before, when he rode from Sonnenburg to take the promotion, long promised, which had come at last. He had heard of her time and again, in this court and that camp, and the worst news to him was the news of her marriage to Max, son of the Electoral Prince of Schlafingen. After that he heard little, for he had no wish to hear anything, and the years drove on and made him a better soldier, a more experienced gallant, a shrewder man of the world, a colder student of life and the conduct of the great and of the fair. In peace, as in war, he won for himself, from men and from women, the pleasing title of the illustrious O’Hagan, a name well deserved by his splendid carriage in action, by his sweet dignity in success.

All this time he had lived unconscious that he was loveless; that was not the reputation of the illustrious

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

O'Hagan in Paris or Vienna, in Venice or Madrid. But now with the face of Dorothea shining upon him in all the sweetness of her thirteenth year, all the gallantries and amours of the dead years showed themselves for what they were, the trivial felicities, the pitiful intrigues incidental to, perhaps essential to, the glittering career of a soldier of fortune, but seeming mean, ignoble, even shabby, when thus suddenly flamed on by the radiance of the love-light of his youth. He had judged his life to be bustling and full of purpose; now it seemed to want meaning and true motion. He had been but a drudge-horse trudging a millround, when he believed that he was galloping to the glory of the world. Memory mettled resolution. At least he would blunder no longer; a voice had called to him, the voice of his beautiful youth, when his lips were clean and his heart was pure and his spirit moved freely in the kingdom of dreams. That he had served his country and served his King did not cheer his retrospect. Any Irish gentleman would do as much nor consider himself to be praised for duty, and the cause of the one showed sadly whenever he had news from Ireland, and the cause of the other showed sadly when he waited upon King James at St.-Germain. But now the clarions of the past rang out a command that the prisoned, stifled Galahad in him leaped to answer. He had work to do and it must needs be great work, for it was in the service of the child, the fairy, the angel of his spring.

“IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE”

It was growing dusk. Philip lit a candle, and after reading the letter once again extended it to the flame and held it till he let it drop, a charred scroll with a little point of flame, upon the hearth. Whatever happened, it would be better for that unknown woman that such a paper should cease to exist. Then he set himself to think of what he had to do. Never for one moment since he read that appeal, and had felt his youth rekindle under the spell of memory, had it occurred to him to hesitate as to his obedience to the call. The only question was how best and swiftest to obey. The first step was to obtain liberty of action. The next was to get together as much money as he could command. The third was to start as soon as possible for the frontier.

He had no need to feel uneasy about money, yet had no need to encroach upon that reserve fund which he, with a caution unusual in a soldier of fortune, had always managed to maintain in sure hands since he first took the field in war and love. In his desk lay a large handful of gold pieces which he had won the night before from the Count de Guiche, and besides that the purse in his pocket was plump enough to justify high spirits. As for the liberty of action, he would set about obtaining that at once. His heart was beating joyously at the prospect of this adventure into the unknown, this summons from he knew not whom, to do he knew not what, a summons not to be denied when it conjured with the memory of a divine child. Then, sharply, in the thick of his

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delight, he sighed. "If only John were here," he said to himself, sadly.

"If only John were here." John the beloved brother, as like himself as his mirror's image; John the joyous comrade, so unlike himself, who took the world so readily as it was and made the most of it; John the splendid reveller, loving all pleasures largely, never denying a desire, never questioning a delight, so long as the one did not prompt or the other offer to reward any action that was not according to the code of honor of the illustrious O'Hagan.

For John, too, was the illustrious O'Hagan in the eyes of his admirers, male and female, as Philip was on the lips and in the hearts of others with whom John had little to do. Indeed, the brothers were very content to divide the flattering epithet as they were already agreed in Irish manner to divide their right to the title of The O'Hagan. For it passed the wit of man to say to which of the twins the distinction of precedence belonged. On the child which came first into a brawling world the nurse in a hurry wound a thread of colored silk, but the nurse in a hurry blundered in her work, and when the pair of babes were wailing in company, the thread of colored silk lay on the floor too loosely twined, and it remained forever beyond the power of nurse or doctor, mother or sire, to say which of the two babies should in the days to come have the right to style himself The O'Hagan. When the boys came in later years to realize the dilemma, they made light of it, indorsing Domenick's

“IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE”

earlier judgment: “There can never be too much of a good thing in this hungry world, so let there be two The O’Hagans.”

Well, John was gone, with all his mirth, his wantonness, his jollity; his last lip kissed, his last cup crushed, his last card hazarded. Had not a Turkish bullet done his business for him yonder in the Morea a year ago, leaving British justice screaming unsatisfied for a bloody murder to his account in London. Well, it was better to die by the hand of a janissary than by the hand of a hangman; to rot on the desolate plain of Argos than to swing from an English gibbet. But jolly John would have been good company now; would have forgotten his cards and his minxes in a twink to serve Philip; would have ridden with Philip if Philip had a mind to his society; would have placed his ever-full purse and his ever-ready sword at Philip’s disposal. The brothers had only met at long intervals since they left Ireland; for some years they had not met; but at every meeting they were the best of friends, the closest of companions, the kindest of allies. Illustrious O’Hagan facing illustrious O’Hagan always realized that The O’Hagan could keep no finer company than The O’Hagan, and acted passionately upon the knowledge. You could never coax John from Philip or Philip from John, whenever the twin brethren were in the same city together. And now all was in the dust.

Philip’s thoughts were interrupted by a tap at the door, by the entrance of Teague looking very mys-

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

terious, by the announcement that a gentleman desired speech with him, the same gentleman that had left the letter in the morning. Eagerly Philip bade Teague admit the stranger, and, rising to his feet, advanced to welcome a man of middle-age, of middle height, seemingly of middle class, though Philip was not able to place his exact state. If he were certainly not soldier, he seemed no less certainly not wholly plain workaday citizen. His face was expressionless, his eyes were expressionless, his mouth expressionless. He came to a halt as soon as he had crossed the threshold, and said, speaking in French, but with a strong German accent, that he had come for an answer to the letter he had the honor to leave for Monsieur le Chevalier O'Hagan in the morning. Philip, seeking some key to the enigma, was for plying him with questions, but the stranger stonily assured him that he had no knowledge whatever of the matter or of the contents of the letter that he had carried and with regard to which he now awaited a monosyllabic answer.

"Yes," said Philip, instantly, whereupon the man, with the same imperturbable air of lack of interest in his commission, produced from an inner pocket another letter which he offered to Philip with a formal bow, and as soon as the packet had changed owners he made as if to retire. Philip delayed him, would have stayed him to drink wine, but the stranger declined, and with the splendid brevity that characterized him he took his leave and disappeared.

"IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE"

Philip hurried to the window, opened the letter, and read:

"Gallant gentleman, on your arrival in Schlafingen, make your way to the inn of the 'Three Kings.' There you will find rooms and further instructions. Heaven keep you in health, for on earth there is much need of you."

This time the letter was signed simply with the writer's initials, "S. v. E." She evidently felt that in the event of this letter coming by Philip's choice into Philip's possession she considered him her friend. And her friend Philip considered himself with all his heart. Though he did not know whether she was young or old, fair or foul, he felt sure that she was youthful and pretty. But that did not matter; she enchanted him with the magic of the past.

Philip O'Hagan drew on his gloves, threw his cloak about him, and, after telling his servant that he would not be long abroad, descended the stairs and stepped into the street. The evening was gentle; Paris swam in a luminous haze. It was that season of the year when to a genial observer young women seem younger, pretty women seem prettier, green leaves and blue sky of a livelier hue than ordinary. It was that season when old hopes renew their youth; when the tags of old ballads seem to whisper in the ears and to linger on the lips; when a man that has ever known ambition knows it again, at least as a bright and beautiful phantom; when a man that has ever trembled with tender sentiments feels again for an instant

THE ILLUSTRIOUS O'HAGAN

those infantile fingers playing on the strings of his cynic heart and awakening some echoes of the rare and ancient music. Philip was still young enough to yield to the incantations of the spring, but this evening he seemed to be recreated, to tread etherealized on field of air, to hear the harps of fairy-land, to walk in the companionship of gods. Yet all the while he was but treading the narrow streets of Paris on his way to the hotel where dwelt the Colonel of the Irish Brigade, to whom he proposed to tender his resignation. He could not tell where his new enterprise might lead. France was at peace. He wished to be free to follow his great adventure.

Philip found no difficulty in obtaining his wish. His Colonel's gray eyes smiled over his gray mustaches on his favorite soldier as he told him that France and Ireland required his services if war should again break out. Then he wrote a letter of introduction to Schlafingen.

"A love-affair, lad," he laughed, half question, half affirmation, while he wrote.

"My first love, my Colonel," Philip answered, gravely. Then saluting, he, with his letter of introduction, departed, leaving the Colonel to wonder what had come to the illustrious O'Hagan of the many love-affairs to make him talk such nonsense.

The next morning, soon after dawn, Philip rode out of Paris on the road to the frontier that divided the kingdom of France from the kingdom and principalities of Germany. Philip was mounted on his black

"IF ONLY JOHN WERE HERE"

horse Sarsfield, and was followed at a little distance by the faithful Teague, on a gray nag. The morning was fine, the road stretched white into the shining distance, and Philip rode forward briskly on to adventure-land with the burden of a love-song on his lips.

IV

THE GENTLEMAN WITH THE ROSE

A FEW hours after Philip had ridden from Paris any friend of his who had happened to be in the neighborhood of another gate of the city would have sworn that he had seen Philip riding into Paris travel-stained and impatient. The traveller made his way at as rapid a rate as the state of the streets permitted, till he came to an inn on the fringe of the fashionable quarter of the town. Here he alighted, stabled his animal, and after removing the dust from his outwards with the aid of a large brush, and the dust from his inwards with the aid of a large bottle, he proceeded to make his way on foot towards the centre of the city. He hummed a jolly song as he went; he twirled between his finger and thumb a flower that he had nipped, while kiss was given and taken, from the breast-knot of the merry maid at the inn, and he seemed to inhale and to exhale satisfaction at the sunny, noisy world about him. Women looked at him admiringly as he passed, for his jaunty carriage invited attention; men surveyed him enviously, jealous of his height, his breadth, his nonchalance, his grand air. A keen observer would have detected

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traces of suffering in the comely face, a pallor as from loss of blood beneath the sunburn, a hint of recent convalescence in the gait, for all its springiness.

The traveller took all attentions with the cool indifference of one accustomed to be looked at, pointed out, admired, and envied. But while the attention he now commanded in his passage through the streets of Paris was for the most part fugitive, one individual whom he countered seemed to take a deeper interest in his person than the rest. This was a middle-sized, middle-aged man, plainly habited, a man with a smooth face and lustreless eyes, who nearly ran against him at the corner of a street. The flrid traveller waved an apology, went his way, and thought no more about the encounter, but the sober-coated man instantly turned round and looked after the departing figure, and then quickly crossing the road, hastened at a pace that was little less than a run to get ahead of the joyous gentleman who twirled the red flower in his fingers. As soon as he had accomplished so much—and the feat was not so easy, for the quarry he stalked went at a brisk rate—the pursuer crossed the road, and, facing back, again met and again stared at the genial gentleman with the rose. When this manœuvre, repeated for the second time, brought for the third time the two very different individuals into proximity, the genial gentleman realized that these encounters were not accidental. His countenance grew less genial, and he came to an abrupt halt. The other instantly took the opportunity to speak.

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"You will pardon me," he said, in his even, ordinary voice, "if I venture to observe that it surprises me not a little to find you in Paris."

The gentleman with the rose began to laugh, a jovial, melodious laugh that defied care.

"Faith," he retorted, "it surprises me a great deal to find myself in Paris, and it delights me a great deal I promise you, but I fail to see what concern it is of yours, anyway."

The man in gray renewed his plaint.

"I had allowed myself to hope that by this time you would be elsewhere."

"You have the advantage of me," the gentleman with the rose commented, cheerfully; "but I am sorry if I cause you any disappointment, none the less. Personally, I am mighty glad to be here."

The stolid man nodded his head with the expressionless activity of a toy.

"I am pleased to find you so discreet," he murmured. "Yet methinks even discretion may be overdrawn."

"May the devil fly away with me!" the rose-bearer began impatiently, but the other raised a hand in grave protestation, and went on heavily:

"If I may presume to suggest, there is very good wine to be had hard by, and quiet, very pleasant for gentlemen who do not care for conversation on the street. Will you do me the favor to drink a glass with me?"

The first impulse of the invited was to decline, the

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second was to accept. True, he had already allayed his thirst on his arrival at the inn, but a good glass of wine was never to be despised, and he began now to have his own private reasons for desiring to know what the devil his would-be host was after. He acted upon the second thought and accepted the offer. Immediately the stolid personage conducted him in silence down a by-street to a decent-looking tavern. The pair entered and seated themselves by a table in the far corner of a deserted room and the guide called for wine. Silence was preserved until the bottle and glasses were brought and the room again empty. Then the gray man, after very deliberately filling his companion's glass and his own, leaned across the table and spoke slowly, picking his words, as it seemed, with care and precision.

"You may think it a liberty on my part to meddle in this matter further than the exact limit of my commission, but surely you will admit that I had every reason to believe that you were willing to assist us?"

"I admit that cheerfully," the gentleman with the rose replied, and he nodded sagaciously. He had not the slightest idea of his associate's meaning, but he desired to learn it, and acquiescence seemed the readiest way to that end.

"Then," continued the other, with a show of animation unusual to his phlegmatic countenance, "you may readily understand that when one so humble as myself ventures to have certain exalted interests"—here he lowered his voice solemnly—"so much at

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heart, it was natural to expect alacrity in so gallant a man as the Chevalier O'Hagan."

The lids of the bright eyes across the table lowered a little, the firm lips tightened a little; the gentleman with the rose accepted the identity with the best grace in the world.

"Frankly," he said, "and speaking as man to man, what did you expect me to do?"

His opposite sniffed a little, apologetically.

"I told you the truth," he said, "when I told you I did not know what the letters contained. Their carriage was an addition to the business which brought me to Paris—business in high service, business of importance. But when the writer commanded me to leave one letter in the morning, to call for an answer in the afternoon, and if that answer were in the affirmative to deliver the second letter, why, naturally I began to put two and two together."

"A dangerous practice," murmured the gentleman with the rose philosophically. "Pray, what was the result of your computations?"

"Why, that the first letter felt the way, tested your readiness to do something that would be explained in number two. So when you said yes, and accepted the second letter, I somehow took it for granted—"

He paused, eagerness and apology contending, to his visible embarrassment. His companion spurred him.

"Yes, yes, speak freely. What was it you took for granted?"

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"I took it for granted," said the other, positively, "that you would at once take the road to Schlafingen."

The gentleman with the rose began to understand the matter now.

"You took it for granted," he repeated, "that I should take the road for Schlafingen?"

"Sir," said the man in gray, with some show of heat, "I can only say that that is what I should have done if I were in your place and had it in my power to be of use to an unhappy lady."

The gentleman with the rose knew all that he wanted to know. He was sufficiently familiar with the scandals of the Schlafingen court, with the tales of the brutalities of the Electoral Prince and the tragedy of the marriage of Dorothea of Sonnenburg. He knew, also, the story of a girl and a boy in a garden, and he found himself putting two and two together as pertinently as old sobersides opposite. The gentleman with the rose finished his wine at a draught and pushed back his chair.

"Sir," he said, rising and resting the tips of his fingers on the table as he looked down upon the man in gray, "you may take it for your consolation that to all practical purposes I am already upon the way to Schlafingen, and if I appear to linger in Paris, you may either take that apparition as a *lusus naturæ*, or, if you prefer, you may assume that I am at this present here and not elsewhere for some very excellent reason. But if you want me again you must

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look for me in Schlafingen, and so I wish you good-day."

In another moment the gentleman with the rose had whisked out of the room and the man in gray was left alone.

The gentleman with the rose wasted no time in trying to find out the lodgings of the Chevalier Philip O'Hagan. He knew that gentleman too well to question the certainty that he had already left Paris. So he made his way back briskly to the inn where he had left his horse.. He walked indifferent to the attractions of Paris that had so delighted him an hour ago, indifferent to the glances of the crowd through which he made his way. His head was humming with possibilities, probabilities, certainties. Given a brutal drunken, loutish husband, and a beautiful, proud, romantic wife, you could easily deduce a court atmosphere hideously disagreeable even to its familiars and positively dangerous to a stranger who was as romantic as Orlando and as chivalrous as Quixote. So when the gentleman with the rose had reached his inn, paid his scanty reckoning, kissed the maid again, and mounted his horse, he summed up the situation pithily to himself as he rode away:

"Philip may be in difficulties down yonder; Philip may have need of me."

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IN the clear heat of the summer night the gardens of the Electoral Palace of Schlafingen showed as like fairy-land as the unlimited prodigality and the limited imagination of the Elector could make them. Thousands of colored lamps twinkled and glittered on the solemn trees, the smooth hedges, the sophisticated arbors, emerald and silver, gold and blue and ruby, in whose strange light the leaves of trees and bushes seemed fiercely, unreally green. Fountains leaped and plashed and trickled in circles of the like fires. Wherever it seemed humanly possible to set a colored cresset a colored cresset had been set. Wits labored in praise of the result. Some admirers likened the glowing lamps to handfuls of jewels scattered by Aladdin on the pathway of his fair; others suggested a resemblance to colored fishes on a magic sea; others, seeking more poetic simile, murmured of fire-flies tangled in the hair of night. The rococo statues, pedantic tenants of that fantastic paradise, alone seemed indifferent to the patches of colored light that mottled their naked limbs with more hues than the coat of Joseph and made your

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Hermes your Harlequin. At the head of the canal a Triton, sprawling in a mighty shell and blowing great spouts of water from a fluted conch, was arched with the vivid lamps whose lights stained his shining body like a rainbow and made the splashing streams leap like strands of liquid metals into the dark channel.

All over the garden there were little arbors, discreet, profound, on whose tables wines and sweetmeats waited to solace those that might seek their seclusion. Farther afield were sombre alleys, lonely groves, and idle thickets, where no lamps flamed a false day, and where those that chanced to stray thither, hand in hand, might confidently count, if not on safety from interruption, at least upon easy and unrecognized escape from interrupters. The Elector's master of the ceremonies was a thoughtful official, whose past and whose present maintained in him a lively sympathy with the tastes and the frailties of courtly humanity, and those that were the best able to appreciate his solicitude were always the first to applaud, to each other, his foresight.

There had been, was, and would be dancing in the palace, but the dances were honored chiefly by the more ceremonial of the courtly party, and the majority of the guests preferred to revel in the coolness and mystery of the many-colored night. The gardens were thronged in all directions with a merry motley of masqueraders, who carried their fantasies in the highest spirits. For the most part they represented figures from the Italian comedy of masques, or the

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French fancies that softened and degraded those brilliant originals, or sham classic figures girt in tunics of gilded leather and crested with feathers, or absurd Chinese mandarins. The multitude of women were chiefly shepherdesses with gilded crooks, substantial sylphs or sturdy goddesses, great in a display of leg, and all, Greek, Roman, or Arcadian, bepatched, behooped, bepainted, and bewigged, according to the order of the mode.

The whole effect seemed to Mr. Banbury, as he paused on the terrace before descending the steps to plunge into the thick of it, too glaringly strong and crude in color, too heavily ornate, to please his British fastidiousness. Indeed, Mr. Banbury, trim, precise, meticulous, in his quiet suit of brown and silver, was a marked contrast to the bulk of the masqueraders. His round and ruddy visage, suggestive of a healthy and phlegmatic but slightly supercilious cherub, loomed in its unmasked nudity of disapproval upon the jiggling jollities below him, with whom, however, he would now condescend to mingle.

But if Mr. Banbury eyed the grotesque license of riot with disfavor, his own solemnity of habit and pomposity of carriage marked him out, first as an eccentricity and next as a victim, to the sportive instincts of the frolic-folk below him. As Mr. Banbury reached the lower level of the steps and advanced slowly, surveying the scene about him through the quizzing-glass affixed to the top of his cane, he was suddenly made the centre for a rush of laughing mas-

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queraders, male and female, who swiftly formed a ring of linked hands round him and began to caper nimbly. Poor Mr. Banbury, sorely perplexed by this flux of popular attention, strove in vain to escape from the meshes of the human net that invested his serenity. Bright eyes derided him through the loopholes of gaudy masks, paste-board heads of animals and demons butted at him and uttered monstrous noises, harlequins clapped him with their bats, fools belabored him with their bladders, impish minxes tweaked him freely with sly fingers. It was all like some incredible and distressing nightmare.

"Good people, good people," he protested, plaintively, when he found that it was impossible to penetrate the leaping, reeling, screaming circle of ridicule that environed him; "good people, what is the matter with you? You embarrass me sadly."

Fresh shrieks of derision greeted this entreaty proffered in Mr. Banbury's best French, and his tormentors revolved around him, more swift, more impudent, and more mischievous than before. No doubt the rakes and jades would have soon got tired of plaguing the stranger, but Mr. Banbury, who was beginning to get very hot and very cross, was just making up his mind to forget for the moment his diplomatic position and come to grips with the biggest man he could catch, when a goddess out of a machine rescued him from his dilemma.

The goddess patently was Diana. A crescent moon of diamonds blazed in her dark hair, a white tunic

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veiled her graceful body; she carried a hunting-spear in her hand. Standing on the steps of the terrace from which Mr. Banbury had just descended she exhorted the cohorts of Comus with a serio-comic gravity.

"Hence!" she cried; "hence, ye tormenting sprites, I banish ye! This swain is under my protection."

She waved her spear as she spoke in a commanding manner, as if it were a magic wand, and as every one of the merry-makers knew her, the sound of her voice and the sight of her smiling face rendered their tranquillizing service to the diplomatist in distress. The teasing circle fell asunder, and the maskers, screaming, laughing, hooting, whistling, eddied and ebbed in floods of merriment through the radiating alleys of the garden, vanishing at length in depths of many-colored mystery. Mr. Banbury, mopping his hot forehead with a silk handkerchief, found himself alone with his celestial rescuer.

"I thank you," he panted. "How hot the brats have made me!"

A home thought came over him, irresistible, and he sighed involuntarily as, also involuntarily, he gave his thought expression:

"I should like a mug of ale."

The lithe Diana laughed, and in spite of his irritation, her laugh sounded as musical in the ears of Mr. Banbury as if he had been indeed Endymion, bathing in the radiance of the moon.

"There is wine in every arbor, young Englishman."

Mr. Banbury shook his head.

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"I had sooner drink ale," he asserted, patriotically. Then, recalling with some annoyance the latter part of her speech, he questioned:

"Pray, how do yon know I am English?"

Again the kirtled divinity giggled, and Banbury felt that his ears were pinker than his cheeks.

"Good Lord!" she cried. "Do you think you flash a Parisian accent?"

Now this was precisely what Mr. Banbury did think of himself, and her irreverence fretted him. To cover his mortification he questioned again:

"What was the matter with those mummers that they worried me so?"

Diana was pat with her answer.

"They were quizzing you for not wearing a costume."

Mr. Banbury frowned sourly.

"I would not make a guy of myself," he protested, emphatically.

Diana dipped him a swimming courtesy that seemed incongruous in a goddess of the chase that was but kirtled to the knees.

"Thank you," she murmured, mockingly.

Banbury saw his mistake and tried hurriedly to mend it.

"Pardon. A woman may wear what plumage she pleases and look well in false feathers. But a man should never choose to be a mountebank. But I forget. Permit me to present myself to your goddess-ship."

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He drew his heels together and made her a stiff little bow, with some measured play of the hat.

"Mr. James Banbury, British Envoy here, newly arrived, and your very humble servant."

Diana made him another cheese, the effect slightly grotesque, the machinery of the movement very patent with so much of her shapely legs displayed beneath her would-be classical garment.

"I am Swanhild von Eltze, attending on her royal highness the Electoral Princess."

Banbury gave her another bow, and then asked her with almost boyish eagerness:

"Why did you come so timely to my rescue?"

The Moon maiden seemed amused.

"I saw you at court this morning and took a fancy to your solemn face."

Banbury inclined stiffly. This, on the heels of the hint as to his French accent, put him on his dignity.

"Vastly flattered," he murmured in a way which he believed to be impressive, but which wholly failed to impress his companion, who laughed heartily.

"Vastly flattered," she repeated, mimicking Banbury's manner and also Banbury's accent to the life. He recognized the mimicry of his manner, but happily failed to recognize the double edge of the interpretation. Diana came dancing near to him and looked into his face, and her laughing eyes were very luminous and alluring.

"You are the most solemn of solemn Englishmen. How can you be so owlsh?"

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Banbury was too fascinated by the eyes to resent any impertinence from their owner. But he remembered his distinguished position and made answer, draped in the best Banbury manner, for all the world as if he were standing for his portrait:

"I take life seriously, I thank Heaven!"

Swanhild's fair face grew suddenly grave, and though the evening air was quite warm enough to justify her in wearing the diaphanous draperies of Diana, she gave a little shiver.

"If we took life seriously here some of us would sicken. It is very clear that you are newly come, to speak so."

"I do not care much for the place," Banbury protested. He was not going to admit that any foreign country could satisfy one who was happy enough to be born an Englishman and to serve an English sovereign. He proceeded affably to explain his reasons for his distaste.

"Too much drumming and thrumming, too much dancing and glancing. Not like my England."

Diana gave a little shiver, but this time it was one of palpable affectation.

"The land of eternal fog," she commented scornfully. Banbury hastened to correct her.

"Honor, that is a libel. We only have fogs in winter. Our summer is summer, I promise. You would like England, I am sure you would. You would like Beddington."

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“Beddington! What a name! What is Beddington?”

Banbury held up his hand in an ecstasy of admiration.

“My house in Surrey. A mellow English manor, a mellow English garden, and, oh, the mellow English ale we table!”

It seemed to Swanhild that something like a tear moistened the clarity of the exile's eyes as he regretted thus the merits of a nectar unknown to her. She extended her hand, which Banbury took with a somewhat awkward alacrity, and, leading him a few steps along the grass, conducted him to one of the little arbors with which the gardens were starred and invited him to enter. The pair seated themselves at opposite sides of a little table daintily provided. Swanhild poured from a crystal flagon a yellow wine that glowed like fluent moonbeams.

“Drink German wine with me,” she pleaded, “and forget your English liquor. Drink the health of the Princess Dorothea.”

Banbury lifted the glass to his lips.

“The Princess Dorothea,” he toasted cheerily and sipped at the golden drink. The sip prolonged itself; the glass rose higher and higher; manifestations of delight rippled over the smooth face of the stranger, and when he set down his glass not a drop remained of its delicious contents.

“Honor, that's ripe and prime,” he murmured in the hush of his church-on-Sunday voice; and, indeed,

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he did right to praise, for vintages were offered to all the world that night which were of the high aristocracy of the Elector's cellar. Emboldened, Banbury leaned forward and touched, appealingly, the beautiful bare arm that rested on the table.

"You are very kind to me," he whispered, confidentially; "be still kinder. A diplomatist's position here is delicate. Perhaps I have heard too much; perhaps I have heard too little. You, a friend of the Princess, cannot you give me a hint of how things really stand?"

Swanhild looked at the young man with good-humor. As she said, she had taken a fancy to him at first sight, and she knew very well that his friendship might indirectly be of service to her mistress. His face was honest, his gaze candid; he was new to diplomacy, innocent of intrigue.

"That is an easy task. What do you expect to find in a court where a girl, beautiful, high-spirited, and good, is given to a prince, stupid, brutal, lewd?"

Banbury's face, paling a little under its pink, showed that he was shocked, even horrified, at this way of classifying august personages.

"The Electoral Prince," he protested, with a quavering voice; "a personable prince."

He was so upset by this way of dealing with the great that he hastened to fill himself another glass of the glorious wine. Swanhild struck her white fist on the table so energetically that flask and glasses rang, and some golden drops were scattered. To prevent

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further damage Banbury seized his glass and drained it slowly, staring in awe the while over its rim at Swanhild, white with indignation, speaking fast.

"He is as vile as she is exquisite. All men would die blithely to kiss her fingers—all save one, her husband. A personable prince! His mistresses set the mode here. You will pay court to them, sir, if you wish to be popular. You will pay no heed to me."

Swanhild put her pretty hands to her face as if to restrain her tears, but she was observing Banbury closely through her fingers. As for him, this kind Diana, the wine, the night, the privacy, made his head spin. It seemed to him that the best thing for his government, and certainly the best thing for his own content, was to remain friends with this enchanting creature. He ventured again upon an unresisted pressure of the white arm.

"Gently," he entreated, "gently. I would always be your friend. I have, indeed, heard something of what you say, but I must confess also that I have heard that a certain lady is frivolous, quick-tempered, quick-witted at her lord's expense—"

He was not allowed to say more. Swanhild was on her feet in a rage and looking at him with such scorn as the original Diana might have shown to overbold Orion.

"That is right. Stand up for him. You will prove a supple courtier. But I tell you that she has a great spirit. She is young and has a right to live; she meets despair with laughter."

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The second glass of wine had fired Banbury to unfamiliar temerities. Rising in his turn he placed his hands on Diana's shoulders, and with a gentle pressure and the entreaty of his glance persuaded her to resume her seat.

"I do but repeat what I hear," he argued. "You must not take offence at my ignorance. But if your Princess be so unhappy as you say, does she"—his voice lowered, a little insinuating—"does she find no consolation for her woes?"

Swanhild shook her crescented head defiantly.

"None. She is as pure as a woman can be who is married to Prince Max."

Banbury looked profoundly sagacious.

"Pity she is childless," he commented.

Swanhild fiercely denied him.

"Thank Heaven she is childless. How could she mother a child like him? It does not matter for the state, since the Prince has a brother that would make a better heir than he. Prince Max cares nothing for the state, or for aught save his pleasures."

Banbury tasted his third glass and felt less reluctant to discuss the conduct of the great. Evidently his Diana—she was his Diana already in his thoughts—had a faith in his wisdom, and it behooved him to prove himself wise. He assumed an air of preternatural intelligence which made Swanhild long to laugh.

"Come, come, you are a partisan," he protested. "We in England are accustomed to excuse certain

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peccadillos in the lord which are quite inexcusable in the lady."

"Will you be of that mind when you marry?" Diana flashed at him. Banbury shook his head.

"If I were to marry I should marry for love and be always my wife's lover."

He spoke warmly, felt warmly, enraptured with Diana's eyes. Then he remembered himself the diplomatist and resumed, judicially:

"But princely persons cannot wed at their will. It is a state affair, and you must not tie King Jack too tightly to Queen Jill."

"Yet must Queen Jill be pinioned to King Jack?" Swanhild questioned.

"That is a different matter." Banbury hesitated; the discussion was becoming delicate.

"Well," he said, striking a new path for his uncertainty, "I suppose you have a prince's party here and a princess's party. Who belongs to this and who to that?"

Swanhild knitted her dark brows.

"Every knave and slave in the court, every minion, every flatterer, every pander, every brute man and loose woman in the Electorate are of the Prince's party."

Banbury permitted himself to smile a little at the sweeping vehemence of Swanhild, but his smile chilled into insignificance before her frigid frown, and to cover his confusion he questioned anew with a lively show of interest.

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"Who form the party of the Princess?"

Swanhild was prompt with her response.

"All who know her, all to whom God has given the grace to understand that rare, brave nature. Every man that is at heart a gentleman, and of these the best is the best Prince's own brother, Prince Karl, who, I think, is in love with her, which is why he seldom shows at court. Every woman that is at heart a gentlewoman, and of these, as I think, the best is myself, however I may seem in your eyes that talk to you like this. Even the Electress has a kind of kindness for her, when she is awake, which is not often."

There were tears in her voice, and the tender heart of Banbury throbbed responsive. He rose from his place; he approached the weeping girl; he would have folded her in his arms had she permitted it. But she was herself again in an instant, dry-eyed and smiling, and the best favor he could gain was the liberty to kiss her white hand again and yet again. Banbury felt very strangely; at that moment he would have bartered Beddington and all its cellars of ancient ale to clip Diana in his embrace and to kiss Diana on the lips. But Diana was bright ice again. Over away in the town a clock struck ten, and Swanhild, holding up her hand to silence her companion, counted the strokes.

"It is time for us to part," she said, gravely, and immediately hot fumes of jealousy mounted to Banbury's brain.

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"Why should we part?" he asked, angrily. "Do you expect to meet some one else?"

Swanhild stared at him in a surprise that was not altogether real nor altogether without gratification.

"Yes," she said, calmly, "I expect to meet some one else. You cannot expect to monopolize my society, young Englishman."

Banbury grunted something inarticulate and reached for the depleted flagon, but Swanhild whisked it from his fingers.

"Surly person," she said, gently, "you have drunk enough, for if you wish to see me again you must keep a clear head. My business now is with a friend of my Princess, but my business will soon be ended."

In a moment Banbury was at her feet metaphorically; actually he kneeled upon a chair and held her hand tenderly while he assured her, what was indeed very truth, that his dearest dream was to see her again as soon as possible. So much havoc had Diana's eyes and the night and the wine, like moonlight, wrought on the Banbury heart. Swanhild smiled at his fervor.

"Do you know the Gallery of the Gods?" she whispered. Banbury shook his head.

"The avenue of lindens to the north of the canal with a statue of a heathen god between every pair of trees. If you should chance to walk there in half an hour you need not walk alone."

Banbury made her a profound bow, and pressed his hat over his heart lest the goddess might hear its ecstatic palpitations.

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"I always study mythology at night," he asserted.

Swanhild extended her hand in silence; in a silent rapture Banbury kissed the delicate fingers, and then, fearing that if he lingered his feelings might be too much for his English dignity, he hurriedly quitted the arbor and, ascending the steps to the terrace, made his way towards the palace, a much more agitated and bewildered gentleman than the formal diplomatist who had so solemnly descended those same steps so short a time before.

Swanhild looked after his retreating figure with a faint, melancholy smile upon her face. She had made friends with the Englishman deliberately, in cool blood had fanned his latent ardor, all because she thought that he might be useful to her in being useful to her beloved Princess; and, after all, somehow the honest, warm heart behind the pompous shyness had appealed to her unexpectedly, as the presence of some sturdy country flower might appeal in the parade of some formal parterre. She laughed a little bitterly, shrugged her comely shoulders, and then, catching up her abandoned hunting-spear, stepped out of the arbor and ran across the grass, swift and graceful as ever Diana in glades of Latmos, till she came to the head of the canal where the Triton spouted ceaselessly. In the shadow of the trees that warded the dark water a gentleman walked enveloped in a mantle. Swanhild made straight for him, and the man, hearing her approach, came to a halt and awaited her.

VI

THE SWEETEST YOUNG PRINCE

AS soon as Swanhild was near enough to the watcher for her words to be heard, she said, low and clear:

“If you come from Paris tell me the newest news.”

Philip O'Hagan immediately came out of the shadow and answered her.

“The newest news is that Philip O'Hagan of the Irish Guards, having left Paris in answer to a letter, and having arrived at Schlafingen, is now in the gardens of the Elector at the time and place appointed in the instructions he found awaiting him on his arrival.”

He made her a profound bow as he finished speaking, and in the mingled lights Swanhild was able to see and admire his gallant bearing and his handsome face. He, now looking steadily at the graceful girl in the frail pagan raiment, waited for her to speak. For a moment Swanhild felt at a loss. The hour she had so much desired had struck; it had brought the man who, as she hoped, would prove the champion of her lady, and now in the presence of this grave and comely cavalier her gladness and her audacity were

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hampered by a most unfamiliar embarrassment, and she scarcely knew what to say.

"Monsieur O'Hagan," she faltered, "what do you think of me?"

Philip made her another bow.

"A beautiful woman, who has honored me with her command. You summoned me and I came."

"Ah, sir," Swanhild protested, recovering her nerve and her impertinence, "you did not come for me."

"Had you sent me your image," Philip replied, "I should have certainly done so. But your letter spoke of another—"

Swanhild interrupted him quickly.

"Oh, sir, I am no love-sick adventuress, believe me. You have been praised in my hearing for a perfect cavalier, hand and heart ever at a good woman's service."

"My sword, my hand, my heart, are always at a good woman's service. What can I do for you?"

"For me, nothing," Swanhild answered; and if there was no note of regret in her voice, there was perhaps a pang—no, not a pang, just a prick—of regret at her heart that, indeed, this ready, splendid gentleman was not her servant.

"You grieve me," Philip said, quietly, and said no more. All through his journey he had wondered what was expected of him, and when he encountered this beautiful, smiling creature, who displayed her graces so freely to the air, he began to wonder whether the adventure was not after all more commonplace

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than he had supposed. Swanhild may have thought that his manner lacked enthusiasm, for she said, hurriedly:

"I serve the noblest, the most wronged lady in Europe, and it is she whom you should be proud to help."

"Who is the lady you serve?"

"I think you know very well," Swanhild answered. "I serve the Princess Dorothea of Schlafingen."

Philip's lips tightened and the muscles of his cheeks twitched at her speech.

"Surely the Princess Dorothea chose her protector when she married Prince Max."

Philip strove to speak calmly, but the old grief was quick within him, as bitter as the old joy was sweet.

"She is wedded to a devil," Swanhild insisted. "She has no friend here who can serve her, as she should be served, with whole and hopeless service. That is why I sent for you."

Philip's heart was beating fast, but he controlled his voice to coldness as he answered, slowly:

"Long ago I knew the Princess Dorothea. Long ago we played as lovers in the rose-gardens of her father's home. I was an Irish soldier of fortune, she was a poor duke's daughter. She forgot me long ago. She married his highness of Schlafingen. What can the Irish soldier of fortune do for her now?"

"I think," Swanhild insinuated, cunningly, scrutinizing his rigid face, "your words are less generous than yourself. The disappointments of love are

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bitter for youth to bear, but I think that a true man should only remember the joys of love, and be tender and selfless in the remembering."

Philip's stiffness weakened before her tender speech, her caressing voice, her shining eyes. The soft, warm air fluttered her draperies; she looked very white and ethereal in the medley of tinted lights. Here was a woman to win a man's heart, here was a woman with a heart worth winning. If Philip and Swanhild had met elsewhere, Philip might very well have found words wherewith to tell her as much. But Philip was living now in the atmosphere of his first love and the shadow of his first sorrow, and was not to be tempted by the charms of a Diana who had no thought to charm or tempt him. Swanhild was desperately honest in her loyalty.

"I reverence my dream," he said, "and it is for the sake of that dream that I am here to-night. I am honored to think that her highness should remember me, should remember that she has a right to my service."

"The Princess remembers the friend of her youth," Swanhild answered; "but it is not the Princess who claims his service. She is far too proud to appeal for help to any one. It is I, and I alone, who, counting on your chivalry, have summoned you to her aid."

"Forgive me," Philip said, "if I say that I seem to have come hither on a fool's errand. If the Princess has not desired my help and does not know of my presence, I have no right to thrust myself upon her

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notice, no shade of justification for posing as her defender."

For an instant Swanhild seemed incarnate anger at the obstinacy of the man; then her nimble reason triumphed over her wrath.

"You talk icily, yet perhaps you talk wisely according to your light. You have not seen him. You have not seen her."

She paused for a moment, her body poised, listening. A flourish of trumpets over yonder at the palace told her that the princely feast was ended, and she knew that the gorgeous Prince Max would be sure to take the air with his favorites. A dexterous general, she had made her plans warily and chance had chimed with her desire.

"Come with me."

She held out her hand and he took it, thrilling a little as he did so at the firm clasp of her fine fingers. She drew him with her away from the canal in the direction of the terrace, almost deserted now, for the signal that the ducal supper had ended meant that the feasting of the lesser guests and the minor dignitaries might begin. Unresisting, he followed where she led, half bewildered, half diverted, thus to travel in the track of a beautiful heathen goddess through the magic of a summer night towards an unexplained adventure and an unknown goal.

Fortune favored Swanhild. As they approached the open space below the terrace, the princely party were descending the steps. Philip, restrained by

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Swanhild in the shadow of the shrubbery, beheld through the boughs a stout young man with a white complexion, a sullen face, and dull eyes. He was magnificently dressed, and had very evidently drunk more than could possibly be good for him. This was the Electoral Prince. He was arm in arm with two women, one handsome in the autumnal fashion of one that had known too well the desires of spring and the lusts of summer; the other young, and attractive chiefly by reason of her youth, very blonde, very plump, and round, and smooth, with a vacant, not unamiable, face. Both women were so dressed as to display as much as possible of their bosoms; the cheeks of both were plastered with white and red; the actions of both were supply obedient to the lavish caresses of the prince. Behind these at a little distance followed a group of the more favored of the courtiers, male and female, all primed to a vinous delight at everything that was said or done by the Electoral Prince.

Swanhild whispered to Philip that the elder of the two women with the Prince was Madame von Lutten—this he already knew, though he did not tell Swanhild as much—and that the younger was Mademoiselle von Ehrenberg. The company moved slowly across the grass within ear-shot of the watchers.

“Faith of my faith,” the Prince hiccoughed, wagging his head from one to the other of the women he escorted, “I do not know which of you is the more adorable. When I kiss you”—and as he spoke he

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embraced Madame von Lutten warmly—"I think I am in Elysium." He turned his head to the Ehrenberg girl and pressed his mouth voraciously to her ripe young lips. "When I kiss you I clasp paradise." He began to laugh stupidly, swaying backward and forward between the women who supported him. "Settle it among yourselves," he chuckled; "I love both of you."

"And we both love you, sire," the elder woman responded, warmly, while the younger only giggled and rolled her blue eyes foolishly. The Electoral Prince came to a halt with a bemused look on his face as if he were trying to follow some train of thought too intricate for his muddled faculties.

"What," he asked, thickly, "was the fool's name in the Roman story who judged the stripped goddesses?"

This time Mademoiselle von Ehrenberg, relatively fresh from the severities of a governess, saw a chance of speaking to advantage. She answered with an attempt at archness.

"I think that your serene highness means Paris the Trojan shepherd, who gave Venus the golden apple as a prize for the fairest."

"I do not care who I mean," the Prince growled, slightly resenting the information with its suggestion of superiority on the part of the speaker. "If I were to give a golden apple to the fairest woman here I should want to rob a golden orchard."

His conceit so pleased him that he began to laugh vacantly, shutting his eyes as he did so and showing

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his teeth swinishly. Philip decided that his serene highness was not a pleasant object to look upon when he was amused.

All the courtiers applauded the Prince's humor. Only Madame von Lutten, with a sour smile, made a comment.

"There can be no question as to the loveliest lady at the court."

Max lolled upon her, drunkenly curious.

"Who is she?" he demanded. "Speak up. Name yourself, hussy, and I will say ay to it."

Mademoiselle von Ehrenberg looked lazily annoyed. Madame von Lutten made a kind of deferential courtesy as she answered:

"I mean, of course, your serene highness's royal consort."

An ugly flush ruddled for the moment the white face of the Prince, and he scowled at the Lutten woman in a rage that did not dismay her who had intended to raise it.

"My wife!" he shouted, furiously. "Damn her and damn you for speaking of her! Praise her to booby Karl, if you please. He will lick up your praises of the jade. Not I."

Mademoiselle von Ehrenberg stared with a childish amazement at the raving Prince, and the courtiers in the rear exchanged significant glances and pretended to have heard nothing.

"Is she unkind to you," she asked, "that you rate her so roundly?"

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"Do not talk of her, I tell you," Max bawled at the girl. "She is unkind to everybody; she does not know when she is well off. You are the miss for my money."

And again he imprinted an unctuous kiss on the pink mouth of the Ehrenberg. Dimpling with pleasure, she was quick to urge a request.

"If you feel so fond, sir, will you grant me a favor?"

Max leered on the girl, Max patted her naked shoulders, fondling her with eyes and fingers.

"Ask and have," he grunted.

Almost timidly miss made her petition.

"Your serene highness's leave to figure in the royal minuet that is to be danced at midnight."

The request had a sobering effect upon the Prince.

"Lord, lass," he declared, "that is clean against etiquette!"

Madame von Lutten thrust in her venomous word.

"Her serene highness would never permit it, child."

The speech had the effect it was intended to have. Precise as the Prince was in all matters relating to the procedure of a court, the idea of a breach of etiquette offended him less than the thought that his wife could prevent it. He glared at the Lutten, and then turned, pawing the Ehrenberg.

"My word is law here for my friends, my court, my wife. You shall dance in the minuet, my kitten, let my cat-wife like it or lump it."

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The girl was a little frightened at the storm she had conjured up.

"I do not want to vex your wife," she whimpered.

"Who cares what you want!" bellowed the Electoral Prince. "It's what I want that counts here in Schlafingen. I wish I could vex her till she killed herself. So were the world merrier."

"How horrid you are!" von Ehrenberg whined, with tears in her meaningless blue eyes. She did not like to be shouted at. Madame von Lutten touched the Prince on the arm.

"Your highness is indiscreet," she whispered.

"Oh, damn discretion!" answered Max. "Come, you jades, shall we have a race in the moonlight? I have drunk enough Tokay to deaden an emperor, but I can still run, I promise you."

With a wild halloo Max seized the two women, a hand each, and started, sufficiently unsteady, to run down the avenue. The three figures flickered away into dimness, the women, fairly alert, fairly erect, sustaining their reeling lord and lover, who filled the night with obscene vociferations as he capered. The little knot of courtiers, fired by the princely example, joined hands, man and woman, and vanished down the avenue, dancing and panting at the heels of the delirious trio.

When the rabble was fairly out of sight, Swanhild and Philip emerged from their retreat. They had observed in silence, and for some moments they kept silent still, standing on the moonlit, lamplit sward.

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and thinking their thoughts. Then Philip turned to Swanhild and made her a very stately bow.

“I pray you,” he requested, gravely, “to bring me at once to speech of her highness the Princess Dorothea. But when you do so, be as good as to present me to her notice, not as Philip O’Hagan of old, but as”—he paused for an instant with his hand to his forehead, and then added—“as the Chevalier Jadis. Which is as who should say, ‘My Lord Long Ago,’” he murmured to himself in English.

VII

ALWAYS IN THE DREAM

SWANHILD, who had foreseen everything with the skill of a master of ceremonies, felt very sure of the whereabouts of her beloved mistress. On the other side of the canal, between its banks and the neighbor river, was situated the pavilion in which of late it had pleased the Princess to dwell, and in the gardens of this pavilion there was a kind of Chinese pagoda, with steps to the edge of the water, and here her serene highness often loved to sit alone and feed the fond carp that thronged the flood. Here tonight, Swanhild, for her own reasons, had made assignation with her lady, begging her to come there after the wearisome court banquet was over, and Swanhild felt confident that Dorothea, who loved any child's play, any pretty mystery, any by-breath of romance that could be enjoyed unawares in that horrid, formal, sordid little court, would keep her tryst. Swanhild was justified in her confidence. As she and Philip made their way along the darkling bank they both perceived a white figure seated pensive beneath the pillars of the pagoda.

Philip felt a catch of the breath and a quaver of

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the heart at the sight of that white figure. The night and its spangled trappings fell away from him as curtains fall, and between the parted folds he saw a garden and roses and a boy and a girl at play. And so for the next few paces he walked unconscious, fifteen years younger, fifteen years happier, till he and Diana came to the place where that silent lady waited and brooded upon Fate.

Commanded by a pressure of Swanhild's fingers, Philip came to a halt a few feet from the pagoda, while the girl, detaching herself from him, advanced and greeted her mistress. As the Princess turned her head Philip could see in the fantastic light the pale face and the wide, bright eyes of her who had been little more than a child the last time he had beheld her, in the pleasaunce thick with autumnal roses, where for the last time he had kissed her lips as he said her farewell, and went out into the world to win glory and gold for her sake. An agony of tears blinded his eyes and the white face became indistinct as a vision seen in a mist.

"Well," said Dorothea to Swanhild. "Will-o'-the-Wisp, what is it?"

Swanhild caught at the dear hand extended and kissed it fondly.

"There is a gentleman here, a poor kinsman of mine, who wants your princely word for advancement."

Dorothea laughed softly, and Philip standing apart heard her and felt the tragedy of her laughter lacerate his heart.

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"What can I do for any one in Schlafingen, Madness?"

Swanhild was not to be denied.

"At least see him—hear him," she pleaded.

Dorothea looked curiously at her eager face and then glanced from her to where the unknown gentleman stood muffled and rigid.

"Is he your lover?" she whispered.

Swanhild uttered little cries of protest.

"No, no, no, no!"

Then turning to Philip she beckoned to him vehemently, and called to him:

"Come forward, sir."

Philip advanced; Philip, who had seen the world and looked into the iron eyes of war, and confronted great captains and wooed great ladies without a tremor—Philip trembled as he advanced and bowed in silence, vaguely conscious that Swanhild was hurriedly presenting him to her princely mistress as the Chevalier Jadis.

"Is this the gentleman?" Dorothea asked, graciously. "How can we serve you, sir?"

At the imminent sound of her voice the trouble of Philip's spirit was too great to suffer him to speak. Swanhild came close to him and whispered in his ear.

"You wish to enter the Prince's service."

The sound of Swanhild's voice seemed to restore Philip to his senses.

"Do I?" he asked, in astonishment.

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"Of course you do," Swanhild admonished him. Then turning to the Princess she pleaded:

"Dear lady, will you hear my petitioner?"

Dorothea inclined her head a little in the direction of the Chevalier Jadis.

"Speak, sir," she said, kindly. Swanhild, drawing back into the darkness behind the pagoda, glided out of sight and hearing and made her deft way to the Gallery of the Gods. Philip, directly addressed, essayed to speak, and was angry with himself to find that he stammered like a bashful recruit.

"Madame," he began, "I hardly know how to frame my request. I feel so confused at my own effrontery in seeking this interview—"

His voice trailed off into silence. Dorothea sought to give him confidence.

"There is no need. To be the friend of my dear Swanhild is to be my friend. Pray, sir, be seated and pray speak freely."

With a gracious motion of her hand she directed the young man to take his place beside her on the bench in the pagoda, one of those acts of amiable familiarity which did her so much harm in the pedantic court of Schlafingen, strangled with etiquette.

Philip seated himself in obedience to her sign. He wondered if she could hear his heart beating. He began to talk big to drown its clamor.

"Madame, to be frank, I am a soldier of fortune. Is there employment for me at the court of Schlafingen?"

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Dorothea looked at him thoughtfully. She could not see his face very clearly in the obscurity of the pagoda, but what she could discern attracted her.

"His highness the Elector and his highness the Electoral Prince are both soldiers and lovers of soldiers. You have seen service?"

Philip answered the simple question simply.

"I have followed arms all my life."

Dorothea laughed a little ghost of a laugh.

"You talk like a veteran, yet your voice is the voice of youth."

"I am old enough to know my mind, and my mind is for your service."

Philip was eager to bring their speech nearer to the long ago.

"I am old enough to remember that I have been younger and to regret my youth."

He said this with so true a ring of sorrow in his voice that it startled the attention of his hearer, and she sought to distinguish his face more clearly.

"Were you happy in your youth?" she asked him.

Philip bowed his head.

"Yes. And you?"

It was something unceremonial thus to question her serene highness, but Dorothea was never ceremonious, and she answered him as frankly as if she had been Swanhild and not Dorothea of Schlafingen.

"I? Yes."

Then as she spoke she gave a little sigh, and he, hearing her, sighed too for sympathy, and then

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catching at his courage as the drill-sergeant collars a lagging recruit, he spoke:

"Madame and Princess, to-night is a night of make-believe. None of us yonder are what we seem to be. We masquerade as Cæsars, being no more than poor workaday jog-trots. Speaking with all reverence, might you and I wear the masking humor for a few moments?"

Something in his voice stirred her with indefinable feeling such as the west wind arouses in those that are tuned to its music, memories of old times, old smiles, old weeping.

"What do you mean?" she whispered.

Philip resolved to hazard much.

"Just this, highness. Let us pretend that we are old friends newly come together after an ache-long time. That we talk of ancient radiant days. Do you consent? So. I will lead the game. Tell me what you see most clearly in the crystal of your memory?"

It seemed to Dorothea that she could not deny this voice which had such power to conjure up the past.

"I see a garden," she said, slowly, "which to my memory seems always sunny, always rich in roses. In that garden a boy and girl are playmates, who do not dream that they will ever grow old."

She paused for an instant.

"That is the pride of youth," sighed Philip.

"They flutter, innocently mad with the joy of

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summer, from rose-tree to rose-tree. They hide in the cool shadows to whisper fairy-tales."

Again she paused. It seemed to her as if in recalling this past she was obeying the command of some power outside her and stronger than herself.

"What are their fairy-tales?" Philip asked, hoarsely. "Tell me of their fairy-tales."

"The boy will be a soldier, a great and saintly soldier, Michael Archangel or George Archangel, who will ride the world redressing all wrongs and succoring all sufferers, but he will always return to the garden and the girl."

"The girl his queen," Philip murmured to himself. Dorothea did not seem to hear him.

"She waits for him on a throne with a crown upon her hair. From the ends of the earth kings come to woo her, but she bids them all turn bridle and ride homeward in despair, for her heart is given to a saintly soldier who travels on the wings of the wind to claim her."

"Does the saintly soldier come?" Philip questioned in a low voice, and in a low voice Dorothea answered him.

"Always, in the dream. I see his eyes, and his hair, and his smile. He rides through a lane of roses, he lays the keys of cities, the crowns of kings at her feet; he kneels to kiss her hand, and then in the core of every rose there rings a marriage-bell."

Her voice faded into silence and Philip took up the fairy-tale.

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"I, too, have loved a garden and dreamed a child's dream. But my hero is not so heavenly. His adventures are not all splendid. His armor is soiled by quagmire and morass; the elves mislead him in the elfin wood; he learns in evil cities the secrets of strange lips, the secrets of strange eyes. His sword is not always for the rightful quarrel, nor his hand always for the noblest hand."

The princess gave a little sigh.

"My dream is sweeter than yours."

Philip sighed too, but his sigh was a bitter one.

"Mine is more real. For when my soldier, stained by his sins, but not ruined by them, returns to the garden, he finds the princess false and fled. She has fled from the roses to marry a barbarous king."

Dorothea drew her hand across her eyes with the gesture of one that wakes from sleep. It startled her to find that her hand was wet with tears.

"Let us wake from this dreaming," she said, wistfully. Philip leaned forward and touched her hand.

"Wait," he said. "Though his mouth has gnawed at the apple of life, still, in gain and hazard, shame and honor, victory and defeat, his heart has been faithful to the girl of his dream."

The insistence of his voice was now irresistible. Dorothea rose to her feet.

"Who are you?" she asked, and trembled as she spoke.

Philip rose to his feet and took off his hat.

"I am Philip O'Hagan."

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Dorothea's impulse was to fling herself into the arms of Philip. But swift as the desire came the recollection that she was a wife, if an unhappy one, and that no man's arms held any shelter for her. How often had she been wooed; how often she had scorned her wooers, true to her sense of honor, true to her sense of purity, and for their sake faithful to the savage who had married her. But though many had striven to tempt her, trading on their knowledge of her sorrows, she had never felt temptation till now, till the moment when the boy hero of her girlhood stood before her, a man, valiant, handsome, passionate. She clinched her hands tightly and forced herself to speak without tears.

"Philip, my little Philip, my gentleman of gentlemen, why have you come back to me?"

Philip would have travelled to the ends of the earth to be so greeted, eyes and voice.

"Madame," he said, "I should be proud if I were permitted to serve you."

Dorothea shook her head.

"There is nothing you can do for me now, Philip."

The night annihilated time. Philip forgot the years that lay behind him and her, forgot that the gardens of Schlafingen were not the gardens of Sonnenburg, forgot everything except that the unexpected had happened and that he was face to face with the love of his youth.

"Nothing!" he cried. "Anything! Everything! You are not happy. You dare not say you are happy."

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For one passionate moment Dorothea longed to answer, "I am not happy," and in so speaking to give the boy that once was, and the man that seemed still, her lover, liberty to speak what words he would. Then she remembered that the worst part of her unhappiness was that she must never confess that she was unhappy.

"I am as happy as I expected to be," she answered him gravely, and then as one who has the wish and the right to direct the course of conversation, she asked him:

"Why do you visit Schlafingen, Monsieur O'Hagan?"

Philip felt that she was setting a barrier between him and her by the tone of her voice, by the gravity of her manner, by her abrupt disuse of his Christian name. He could do nothing but accept her decision. As to her question, she evidently did not know, and therefore must not know, that he had been sent for.

"Madame," he answered, "duty brought me to within a little distance of Schlafingen; pleasure prompted me to visit your dominion that I might ascertain if my old playmate remembered me, and the chance of a masquerade brought me acquainted with your maid-of-honor."

"Your old playmate has never forgotten you, Monsieur O'Hagan," Dorothea said, softly. "It is very pleasant to welcome you to Schlafingen. Prince Max will be glad to make your acquaintance. If you will accompany me I will present you to him."

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She turned her head and called into the darkness: "Swanhild!" and out of the darkness Diana, who had left the Gallery of the Gods, fluttered alert.

"It is almost time for the minuet," the Princess said. "I have asked Monsieur O'Hagan to give me his hand for the dance."

VIII

THE MINUET

AMONG all the merry maskers of that splendid festival no mask seemed merrier than a certain personage costumed as the fantastic Coviello of the Italian comedy. This nimble individual was dressed in his single suit of gray flannel with huge red buttons. A close cap adorned with long cock's feathers covered the whole of his head, save his face, which was concealed by a black and red mask, with a nose like the beak of a chanticleer. Below the mask a ragged straw-colored beard straggled. His wrists and ankles were circled with bracelets of little bells, which made a brisk jingling to all his movements, and he carried a quaint lute to which he occasionally sang, very nasally, some snatch of a ballad in a villanous Venetian dialect. This rattlesome jester skipped, jigged, tripped, and twisted like a fellow possessed; seemed to be a thousand men at once in a thousand places at once, and as he wriggled and tickled his way through the pack of masqueraders he had some wantonry for every woman's ear, some jocularly for every man's, that left in the wake of his progress a ripple of grins and titters.

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Never was such an indomitable merry-andrew, never such a bitter wit; Pasquin was affable to him, and Diogenes a parasite. His lips leaked lampoons, he whispered innuendoes; he displayed a very genius for ball-room intrigue. Once a woman took fright at his words, whereupon, changing his bearing, he kissed her hand with so gallant a manner and turned her a compliment so prettily apologetic that she gave him blessing for curse. Once a man took offence needlessly, and being choleric, began to bluster of cudgellings till the mountebank caught him by the wrists in a grasp that was not to be denied, and forcing him to his knees left him in the attitude of abasement, a staring-stock for the multitude and most firmly resolved to try no further conclusions with his adversary.

The rascal seemed to gather as he went all the scandal of the court, all the tattle of the city, and to serve it anew, spiced to the fieriest diet, to those that found it most or least delectable as accident chanced. Wherever he strayed in the maze he was easily king of all the buffoonery, master of the mirth, lord of misrule, his errant reign a blaze of glory. He never lingered long enough in one corner or dallied long enough with one coterie for his humors to stale or his pungencies to pall.

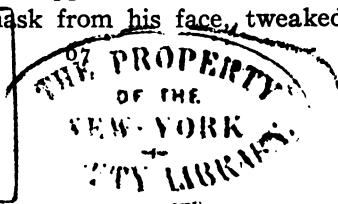
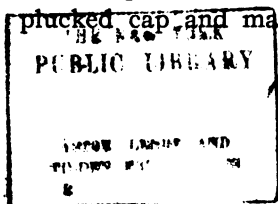
On the stroke of midnight the princely minuet was to be danced in a portion of the gardens private to the special, to the elect, to those that birth or favor or high place made intimates of the court. By that

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time the mass of the revellers were betaking themselves home with humming heads and thumping hearts, some acoach, some afoot, all at the top of jollification and startling the moonlit streets of the sleepy little city with their splashes of bright color and their snatches of wild songs.

Many a matron wondered, as she wended her way, who the rogue was who had hazarded such bold compliments from behind his bird's beak. Many a maid remembered with a little sigh the fantastico with the funny lute who could pay such tribute of pretty phrases beneath his breath in the most audible of little whispers. Many a man chuckled at the thought of some droll story told in a flash by the jolly stranger as he paused for a moment on his mystifying passage, or grunted at the recollection of some stinging witticism to which now, and now only, he had found the fitting repartee.

The antic gallant of whom so many were thinking was not with those that went their way through Schlafingen to beds that were seldom unoccupied so late. He was not indeed one of the elect, but he had heard of the princely minuet and decided to witness it. Escaping from the main stream of the retiring guests, he glided into an alley of comparative obscurity, where the lamps were beginning to grow dim and where some had gone out. At the end of this alley, behind the shelter of a yew hedge, he effected a metamorphosis. He stripped off his loose gray dress, plucked cap and mask from his face, tweaked the



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bunch of straw-colored beard from his chin, and stood up in the dusk a comely gentleman dressed courtly in black. He made a bundle of his grotesque accoutrements, laid the lute upon them to keep them in their place, and then, with the cunning dexterity of an old campaigner, proceeded to pick his way, soundless and in shadow, towards that part of the garden where a faint hum of voices and the shrill tuning of fiddles told him that the princely minuet was to be performed.

As Dorothea and her companions came to the place appointed for the dancing, the Princess glanced over the groups of courtiers till she found the man for whom she was looking, the Marquis de la Vigerie, representative of France at the Electoral court. She made him a sign with her fan that was a summons to her side, and la Vigerie was quick to obey the invitation. He was a handsome man, no longer young, but resolutely determined never to grow old, who had modelled himself with idolatry upon the Duke of Orléans and sought on a smaller scale and in foreign places to emulate his reputation for successes and excesses. He had flagrantly laid siege to the Princess's heart on his first arrival in Schlafingen and had taken his total discomfiture with a great deal of good grace, never without hope, waiting on opportunity and consoling himself in the mean time by the knowledge that Schlafingen was rich in pretty women not unwilling to accept the homage of the eminent Frenchman. Now his pulses quickened as he caught the

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Princess's signal, only to flag again as he saw at Dorothea's side a handsome gentleman new to court, yet whose features seemed not altogether unfamiliar to him.

Dorothea greeted la Vigerie brightly as he made her his humble salutations.

"Marquis," she said, "I wish to make known to you Monsieur the Chevalier Philip O'Hagan, of your monarch's regiment of Irish Guards, who is making a passing visit to Schlafingen, and who naturally wishes to pay his respects to the representative of his sovereign."

Philip bowed to la Vigerie and la Vigerie bowed to Philip, la Vigerie eying the new-comer with a mental disapproval which found no expression in his cordiality of speech or bearing.

"I thought I knew monsieur's face," he said, urbanely; "but of course his name is very familiar to me, as to all who follow with admiration and with envy the careers of brave soldiers. I can only regret that it was not my privilege to present Monsieur O'Hagan to your highness."

Philip was hastening to explain, conscious of a dereliction of etiquette, that he was the bearer of a letter for the Marquis from his Colonel, which he had proposed to present in the morning, when Dorothea gayly interrupted him.

"The Marquis must needs excuse you, for it was at my invitation that Monsieur O'Hagan is here tonight. Monsieur O'Hagan is an old friend of mine.

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We were playmates in Sonnenburg years ago, when we were both little more than children."

La Vigerie took note of the fact with no great comfort, but his affability beamed the more.

"Monsieur O'Hagan's name is sufficient introduction to the heart of any French gentleman, but the privilege of your highness's friendship would be an introduction to paradise were he not already arrived there."

Dorothea laughed and Philip bowed again. He knew la Vigerie by sight; he knew of his reputation, and felt sure that he must have looked upon the Princess as a possible prize, but he felt equally sure, now that he had beheld her again, that Dorothea was of a different temper from the ladies who gave to la Vigerie his easy laurels.

Dorothea asked la Vigerie to present Monsieur O'Hagan to the master of the ceremonies as a distinguished soldier of high standing in France, and when this was duly done she announced her intention of taking Monsieur O'Hagan's hand in the coming minuet in place of the Frenchman for whom the honor was intended. Hurried interrogations of the acquiescing la Vigerie by the somewhat flustered court official were met by urbane assurances on the Frenchman's part that even if the stranger were not, as he undoubtedly was, of noble, if not of royal blood in his own country, his standing in France and his career as a soldier were in themselves sufficient to justify the honor which was about to be accorded to him. La

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Vigerie did all this out of no kindness to the new-comer, whom he regarded resentfully as a very possible if not, indeed, already publicly proclaimed, rival to his flame, but from a canny desire to satisfy any wish of Dorothea's which might set up a sense of gratitude or serve in some way, some how, some time, to put her in his power.

And now the fiddles having been scraped and strained into tune, and the guests being all assembled, the moment came for the minuet to be danced. The master of ceremonies had made all the arrangements. Since la Vigerie had allowed the new-comer to take his place as the partner of the princess, the change had been accepted by the official mind without too much disturbance of its balance. The most distinguished of Grand Duchesses had already been found to take the hand of the Electoral Prince. His highness was not indeed as yet present, but the master of ceremonies informed Dorothea of the name and rank of the lady who was to face her, and all that remained was to do the same as a mere matter of form to the Prince on his arrival. Max frankly detested these formal dances, and always acquiesced with sulky indifference in the decisions arrived at by the master of ceremonies, his one desire being to get the tiresome business over and return to his wine, his dice, and his raddled nymphs.

The striking up by the fiddles of the national air of Schlafingen made it known to all assembled that his highness the Electoral Prince had arrived. Couples

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hastened to their allotted places. In another instant the fiddles flowed into the dainty plaintiveness of a French air and the stately, graceful dance began. Few of those present, and none of those taking part in the dance, had noticed a little occurrence which took place while the band was still playing the national air. Prince Max had staggered into the enclosure, dragging with him the half-delighted, half-frightened Ehrenberg, and had hiccoughed to the dismayed chamberlain his intention to tread the measure with her. A feeble protest that the Grand Duchess of Wisbeck had been chosen for the honor was brushed aside by Max with a drunken, "Damn the Grand Duchess of Wisbeck!" which there was no gainsaying. Then to the chamberlain's despair Max reeled to his appointed place dragging his Ehrenberg after him, while the offended and astounded Grand Duchess, after a hurried recourse to a smelling-bottle, had to be escorted to the supper-room in a huff and plied with strong waters by obsequious friends. A chamberlain in consternation could do nothing but let the dance proceed.

Dorothea, bright and high-spirited at the coming of Philip, with its rekindling of girlish memories, had paid no heed to the composition of the minuet, and Philip, even if he had not been absorbed by the thought of his partner, would have been too unfamiliar with the personages of the Electoral court to know that anything unusual had taken place. But while others were watching and wondering, too be-

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wildered even to whisper, suddenly Dorothea saw in front of her the foolish smooth face, the foolish smooth hair of Mademoiselle von Ehrenberg, and saw at the same moment that she was holding the hand of the Electoral Prince, while she stared with a kind of nursery stare, half defiance and half deprecation, into Dorothea's eyes.

Philip, moving slowly and easily through movements long familiar to him and thinking of little else than that he held Dorothea by the hand, suddenly felt that soft hand harden in his and grasp his fingers with a grip of astonishing fierceness. Looking up in surprise, Philip beheld Dorothea's face pale and rigid with some powerful emotion unintelligible to him, and his hurried glance around revealed to him on the countenances of the company an apprehension that he could not appreciate.

Immediately opposite he saw a fleshy white-faced gentleman, who reeled in his gait, and by his side a painted piece of girl's flesh, that seemed at once timid and insolent. He knew the man was the Electoral Prince, he thought the girl was the one he had seen on the terrace. He realized that something very serious had happened when the Princess, ceasing from the dance, turned to him and said, clearly and coldly:

"Have the goodness to conduct me to a seat; Monsieur O'Hagan, I will dance no longer."

The consternation was general. Philip, having only one purpose in the world, to pleasure his lady,

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made the princess a deep reverence and handed her from the paralyzed minuet as composedly as if he were conducting her to her coach after the theatre. All the other dancers stood still for an instant, then the Electoral Prince, furiously shaking himself free of the now frightened Ehrenberg, who tried to restrain him, staggered across the grass and confronted Dorothea and Philip.

"Gods and devils, woman!" he shouted, "what is the meaning of this?"

His manner was so menacing, his tone so brutal, that Philip made ready, come what might come of it, to take him by the throat and fling him from Dorothea's path if he moved an inch nearer. But Dorothea, looking at him disdainfully, answered him, disdainfully:

"Your serene highness will excuse me if I decline to dance with some of your serene highness's friends."

Max raised his hand as if to strike her a blow, but the silence about him, a silence only broken by the sniffing of the Ehrenberg, had its effect upon his drunken humor. Philip made to step between the calm woman and the savage man, but a touch from Dorothea's hand upon his arm stayed him, and he remained by her side. By this time the despairing chamberlain was by Max's side clawing at him, vainly aiming to pacify. All others stood apart and held their breaths and were vaguely conscious that for once in a way they were beholding something really worth looking at.

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"What the devil, madame!" began Max again, "what is it to you whom I choose to dance with in your damned fandangoes? I do not question your spark, though I never saw his cursed face before. Why should you quarrel with my partner, whose name you know well enough?"

At this moment Monsieur the Marquis de la Vigerie asserted himself, bland and suave.

"Your serene highness," he said, as calmly as if nothing out of the way were toward, "will you permit me to present to you a gentleman recommended to me by my beloved monarch, a soldier whom France delights to honor, Monsieur the Chevalier O'Hagan."

The Marquis spoke mellifluously, but there was a firmness in his voice as of one that meant to be heard and that meant to be attended to.

Philip bowed stiffly to the Electoral Prince. Undoubtedly the best thing to do under the distressing conditions was to act as if nothing had happened as long as that were possible. The Electoral Prince flushed an angry red. The composure of the Frenchman served in some degree to sober him, and his chamberlain's prayers had at last touched his sodden senses.

"It should be live and let live," he grumbled. "Why should not poor miss foot it in this foolery if she has a mind to it? She is no worse than the others."

"I am presenting to your serene highness my friend and my king's friend, Monsieur O'Hagan," interposed la Vigerie with quiet insistence.

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Max scowled first on the Frenchman, who met his glare with an air of impeccable politeness, and then on the Irishman, who gave him back his frown with a look of hatred that he yearned to interpret into words and deeds. Yonder in the arbutus shrubbery another Irishman, watching the scene, saw and applauded.

"Sir," Max grunted surlily, "I never saw your damned face, nor heard your damned name before, but I tell you plainly that I like neither the one nor the other, and if you have a mind to take offence, by God I have a mind to give offence!"

He was so stupidly, brutally drunk that, had he not been what he was, he would have been no more heedable than some sodden ruffian in the street, nursing a bulkhead. But because Max was the heir to a sovereign prince, and because the Marquis de la Vigerie never cared to make mischief where mischief would be of no use to him, he pushed himself between Philip and the Electoral Prince. Philip was minded to take his highness by his embroidered collar and souse him in the nearest fountain, an inclination distinctly hinted in the glitter of his eye. Max, on his side, was hot for a brawl, and was fumbling clumsily for his sword-hilt. Dorothea surveyed him with a gaze in which an age of scorn had turned into a sudden flame of hatred. Monsieur de la Vigerie felt the breath of all the volcanic passions about him, but was dexterously resolved that they should only blow as he pleased.

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"Your highness has a nimble wit," he said, and bowed, "and we French gentlemen have the skill to appreciate what others might think a misfit. It will be my pleasure to present Monsieur O'Hagan more formally to your notice to-morrow."

Max scowled malignly.

"You talk very fine, Monsieur the Marquis, you talk vastly fine. But if there be those too high and mighty to dance with my friends, then I'm damned if I will dance with theirs. Come, kitten."

He turned to the Ehrenberg and caught her by the arm.

"Let us go our ways and play puss in the corner."

The Ehrenberg was very red-eyed, and her cheeks had paled from their familiar pink under her paint. She was thoroughly alarmed at the fury of the wind for which she had whistled, and wished very heartily that she had nipped her ambition to figure in the minuet. She would have liked to slink out of sight quietly, but she had no will to resist the Prince, and could do no more than suffer him to lug her away.

Most of the company had dispersed ere this, moved by the chamberlain's hints and their own sense of discretion, so the Prince and his minion found an easy road open to the palace and to such pleasures of drink and dalliance as the man desired and the woman at least professed to desire.

IX

PASSIONS IN THE PARK

AS the pair trailed away along the terrace Dorothea turned to Philip, from whose face the slightest shade of annoyance had already vanished.

“Monsieur O’Hagan,” she said, “I think that for me the pleasures of the evening have happily come to an end, and that I am free to retire to my own dominion. Yonder is my kingdom,” and she pointed to where her pavilion lay apart beyond the canal.

“If you should happen to pass under its shadow on your way hence, you may chance to see a woman at a window who will wish you good-night as you pass.”

Philip bowed profoundly. He was troubled with a thousand wonderful thoughts, and it certainly did not seem his part to preach prudence to a self-willed and much-offended princess. She spoke now in a little louder tone as the Marquis de la Vigerie drew nearer.

“Good-night, Monsieur O’Hagan,” she said. “We hope that you will honor our court with your presence very often so long as you delay in Schlafingen. Monsieur the Marquis, will you give me your escort to the pavilion?”

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The Marquis bowed. Dorothea made a sign to Swanhild, who, with her Banbury in tow, had joined the company at the beginning of the minuet and had remained after most of the company had dispersed on the minuet's abrupt conclusion. Dorothea and her lady-in-waiting moved away accompanied by la Vigerie. Banbury, after a moment's hesitation, advanced towards Philip, where he stood alone lost in sweet thought.

"Mr. O'Hagan—" Banbury began.

Philip turned and looked at him, at first a little uncertain, then suddenly recognizing.

"Surely, surely, it is Monsieur Banbury!"

Banbury bowed.

"At your service."

"I remember," said Philip, laughing, "that the last time we met you asserted that the climate of County Surrey was finer than the climate of County Cork. The next morning we were both called away from Paris, and chance has sundered us ever since. There are quiet corners in this park. Shall we settle the trifling difference?"

He tapped the hilt of his sword playfully. Banbury shook his head. He took Philip's jesting seriously; it was part of the Banbury manner to take pleasantries seriously.

"My dear sir, we cannot battle here in the Prince's park. And, indeed, I do not know how far my present position would allow the representative of his country to remember the quarrels of the private man.

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Later on, when I have my holidays, I shall be delighted to spit or be spitted. In the mean time I can do you a service."

"Can you?" laughed Philip. "What is it?"

Banbury came nearer and spoke almost in a whisper.

"There is a certain exalted personage who is said to have domestic difficulties. He would be very glad of any excuse for finding a certain exalted lady in the wrong, or apparently in the wrong. Any friend of hers will therefore do well to be careful for the lady's sake."

Philip's first inclination was to be nettled and to resent the diplomatist's suggestion. But he saw in Banbury's honest face that he meant well, and he thanked him in the same general terms that Banbury had employed in his warning.

"I am sure," he said, "that any true friend of any lady would be most careful of his conduct."

He bowed and Banbury bowed.

"Good-night," said Banbury, and "Good-night," echoed Philip, and Banbury turned and went his way, leaving Philip alone.

Here and there throughout the garden stray revelers were straggling by twos towards the palace and the final festivities of the night. Philip was thinking of Banbury's words and his own promise to the Princess to pass under the shadow of the pavilion in the hope of seeing a woman's face at a window and hearing a woman's voice. There was nothing very rash in that, he reflected, and even if there were, it

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was not for him to question any of her wishes. More than ever the love of his youth seemed now the sovereign lady of his life, although fate held them so inexorably apart.

As Philip stood silently, deep in his reflections, a page of the palace household advanced towards him and handed him a letter, and, saluting him respectfully, retired. Philip turned the missive in his fingers indifferently, and saw that it was sealed with the image of an antique harp and bore the motto, "Toute la lyre." The too-eloquent wax seemed to rekindle some displeasing memories, for Philip frowned as he broke the seal, and his frown increased as he opened the letter and read:

"VALIANT TRAVELLER,—Since your arrival you have met with too many of the inclemencies of Schlafingen. Is it not time to accord you some of its clemency? There is one here who has long remembered with regret and who now rejoices to remember the time when she and Philip O'Hagan were friends. If Philip O'Hagan's memories are as fresh and as tender, he has but to linger awhile in the gardens. He shall not linger long unaccompanied."

The letter bore for signature the Christian name "Caroline," which Philip knew too well to be that of Madame von Lutten. He paused for a moment in angry reflection, then, shrugging his shoulders, he tore the letter contemptuously in two, flung the halves upon the grass, where they lay patent in the

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moonlight, and turning on his heel walked swiftly away in the direction of the pavilion.

As soon as he was out of sight a head was cautiously obtruded from the shadow of the nearest shrubbery. The head appeared to reconnoitre, and apparently finding the time and the quiet propitious, emerged with its appended body into the open. The lurker stretched himself as one that was tired of lying in ambush, and then going swiftly over the sward swooped upon the fragments of the rejected letter, and putting the ragged edges together calmly mastered their contents.

"Now who the devil may Caroline be?" he murmured to himself, in perplexity, as he pocketed the document. "I wonder why Philip is so ready to make an enemy of an old friend in a place where I'm thinking he will need all the friends he can get together."

He looked around him cautiously, for his quick ear heard sound of distant footsteps, and he immediately saw the figure of a woman, cloaked and hooded, coming quickly down the alley in his direction.

"This is Caroline, for a thousand pounds," he murmured, and waited upon events.

The woman came to a halt quite close to the motionless watcher, and addressed him in a soft voice that was tuned to a cunning music.

"I am glad to find that Philip cares to wait for my coming," she said, fixing her bright eyes upon the watcher's smiling face. The woman wore a mask, so

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the watcher could see no more of her face than those bright eyes, but he felt their appeal and grew curious.

"Sure I'd wait for you as long as Oisín lingered in the Land of Youth," he answered, gallantly, clapping a hand on his heart and making a reverent leg.

"Then you have not forgotten our friendship?" the mask questioned again, and the reply rattled out emphatic.

"Indeed I have not," the man asserted, consoling his conscience with the sage reflection that it was clearly impossible to forget what one had never known. "And I am longing for the sight of your lovely face this minute."

Instantly the lady unmasked and showed him in the moonlight a face no longer in its prime youth, but still a face extremely handsome, a face of passionate demand and passionate promise, fine eyes, a fierce mouth, cheeks smooth beneath the rouge.

"Have I changed?" she asked, with a coquettish affectation of sadness.

"Devil a bit," cheerfully answered her companion, who had never seen her before in his life. "Unless, indeed, you call it a change to be if possible a taste more beautiful than you were the last time."

"Ah, that last time!" the lady sighed, dreamily, and her companion sighed, too, as he repeated the words, "the last time," and wondered on what terms it had left this pretty lady and himself, or, rather, the one that he was taken to be. Discretion prompted

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him to let the lady do the most part of the talking, and the lady seemed very willing to talk.

"Well," she said, "the stupid palace is shut for the night, and the pretty Prince is playing the swain with his new plaything. You must not bear him a grudge for his roughness; he had drunk more than his custom and will make you his humble apologies to-morrow."

"Never trouble your head about that," made answer her affable companion. "I have seen too much of the world to be worried by the whim-whams of a little German flipperkin."

The lady beamed on him.

"My home of Allegresse lies but a little way off, and my coach waits at a gate hard by. If you will come with me we will find lights there and wine and dice and bright eyes—"

"You will bring those with you," murmured her interlocutor, throwing himself into the spirit of the adventure. The lady tapped him with her fan.

"I wonder," he said, in himself, "what your name may be?"

The lady went pleasantly on.

"And when we have made an end of supping and playing we can sit apart and talk of old times."

"And act our battles over again?" the man suggested, with a smile. The lady looked agreement, but she tapped her cavalier again sharply with her fan, so sharply that in her vehemence she let the pretty toy slip from her fingers and fall on the grass at a little distance from the pair. As the man turned

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to pick up the trinket, the woman made as if to run, though it was but a fluttering kind of a run that took her at a little pace over a little space, and as she ran she called :

“Follow me, friend Philip; follow me to Allegresse.”

“Ay, and to some devilment also, I’m thinking,” the man muttered, while he stooped to pick up the fan. As he straightened and turned to follow his ambling herald, he whispered to himself with a grin :

“Philip seems to be getting on very well in Schlafingen.”

Then speeding nimbly over the grass, he soon caught up with the flying nymph, and the pair made their way together towards a side gate of the park.

And so for a while the park seemed devoted to silence and to quiet. But only for a while.

X

COMUS AND HIS CREW

MAX, supping and sulking with his Ehrenberg and a few men minions and women minions to his mind, began to grow surly. He was more than in his cups from the beginning, but he kept filling himself up and up with none to say him nay, till from sulky he grew surly, and from surly, savage to madness. At first he stuttered, jumbling his words dully, so that they seemed to tumble from his loose mouth without meaning and without control. But as he drank his muddled wits seemed, if not to grow clearer, at least to crystallize, and his fuddled fancies to rally like a discomfited army round a last standard of intemperate rage. He spoke less, but his speech was firmer; his flabby lips tightened, his swimming eyes dried and steadied; his hands, that had pawed aimlessly at the napery, took on a kind of rigidity. His pot-companions, drunk beyond heed of circumstance, noted no change in his bearing, but the Ehrenberg, flustered though she was by the evening's work and the wine she had taken to tune her nerve-strings, noted the change without in the least understanding it, and began—as was her way when anything dis-

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quieting and surprising vexed her—to grow frightened. She tried, ineffectually, to stay his hand from flask and glass; she laid her own hand once in timid attempt to restrain upon his arm, only to find her fingers flung roughly off, and to meet an ugly glare on Max's face that made her shrink and shiver. The ready tears filled her childish, her dollish-blue eyes.

“What is the matter with you?” she sniffed, pettish and terrified.

Max answered her by banging his hand on the table till the glasses rang and rattled and the flushed faces of his company turned on him in sodden astonishment.

“Matter!” he bawled; “the matter is that I have an upstart wife that needs taming and that shall be tamed.”

He leaned his trunk across the table, tipping over a couple of bottles that vomited their red and white across the cloth and onto the floor, where they puddled.

“What is the duty of a wife?” he shouted, and his fiery eyes ranged the circle of red faces. “What is the duty of a wife, I say?”

Somebody essayed to answer him, incoherent with hiccoughs, but not inaudible, giving the words, “to love, honor, and obey.”

Max banged his hand again upon the table.

“Love!” he cried; “the jade never loved me; and as for honor, why, I can honor myself without her help; but obey, ay, that's the mark.”

He travelled again the round of the puzzled, flustered faces.

“Does she obey me?”

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The faces still stared at him vacant.

"No! Shall she obey me? Ay."

He shouted his affirmation in a great voice, and flinging himself back in his chair gulped another cup of wine. His friends were past understanding, but they guessed that he expected approval, and they gave it with inarticulate cries and the unsteady elevation of wineglasses.

"I tell you," Max asserted, now horribly confidential, "the jade should obey me and the jade shall obey me. You saw how she flouted me to-night; you saw how she flouted this pretty child here," and as he spoke he caught the blubbing Ehrenberg clumsily round the neck and rubbed her face against his shoulder. When he let her free again there were smears of white and red on his silken coat, and the girl's face looked like a puppet's that had been left out-of-doors in the rain.

"She is too high and mighty to dance with my friends, is she?" Max screamed, his colder drunkenness killing his wits while keeping the show of them alive. "She will insult my partner; she will insult me, the beggarly upstart, and think herself safe because a couple of damned foreigners stand by, that may write despatches to their cursed courts. But she has no palavering Frenchman or beefy Briton with her now, and 'tis time she made amends. Come with me, friends, and come you, missy."

He rose as he spoke and dragged the Ehrenberg to her feet with him.

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"She shall apologize to missy now before the lot of you, or else be sick and sorry."

His speech was peppered with profanity; his hearers were familiar with such forms of strengthening speech, but even their senses, deadened by use and drenched with wine, quickened a little to admiration of the volubility and variety of the Prince's oaths. Every man and woman rose, laughing furiously, laughingly foolishly. They did not know what Max was going to do and they did not care, but they had a vague sense that some diversion was being promised to them. Only the Ehrenberg, whose fears had shielded her reason, clutched at the Prince's arm and pleaded feebly.

"Your highness, do not be angry. I do not mind. Her highness must be in bed by now."

Max lifted his free hand as if he would strike the girl on her tear-stained face, and she released him and shrank from him with a moan.

"What if she be?" he answered. "Do you think I have never seen her in bed till now? She shall kneel in her night-gown and beg your pardon, my pretty."

He turned from her, and, lurching towards the fireplace, caught up his gold-headed stick that stood in an angle.

"This shall teach her wisdom," he yelled, swinging it round his head and sweeping a number of glass pendants from the chandelier above him, that rattled on table and floor like gigantic hailstones.

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"This shall teach her manners—this shall teach her penitence!"

The Ehrenberg had sunk in a little heap on the floor and swayed in the midst of her spreading hoops like a battered flower. Max gripped her by the shoulder and the girl squealed as his fingers bruised her tender plumpness.

"Come!" he ordered; "come!"

"I can't," she sobbed. "I am sick, I am going to faint. Go on; I will follow you."

Indeed she was in a pitiable condition, half under the table and clinging desperately to one of the legs. Max shook her and then let her go with an oath.

"Come or stay," he said, "it is all one. If you do not come to her she shall come to you, if I have to flog her through the park till she fall at your feet. Come on, you others."

He gave a hunting cry and made a dash for the open window, flourishing his stick. The madness that had steadied his speech had stiffened his sinews, and though he reeled as he ran, he could run without falling. Out into the moonlit night he leaped and out into the moonlit night the others followed him, drunken men and drunken women, howling like the crew of Comus, as with Max at their head they raced unsteadily across the shining grass.

No sooner were they gone than the Ehrenberg staggered to her feet and ran screaming for help through the corridors in the direction of the Elector's apartments.

XI

THE MAN AT THE BALCONY

TO Philip, as he walked through the deserted gardens, the quiet and the silence of the night were qualities of enchantment, acting upon his senses as fantastically as if the very air about him were woven of the web of a magician's glamour. He had set out for Schlafingen in a transport of enthusiasm, drunk with the wine of memory, dizzy with the music of the tune of youth. He had arrived at Schlafingen something sobered, something disheartened, something doubtful. What after all should he be able to do for this princess of Schlafingen, of whom he knew nothing? How could he hope to find any trace of the girl of boyhood's garden in the woman of the world who had consented to become the bride of the Electoral Prince? If she were disillusioned, would not he, too, pay a price for her friendship with his own bitterest disillusion? He had smiled himself into favor and sighed himself out of favor too often to wish for such fortune here, and even while he upbraided himself for the impertinence of such thoughts, he knew too well the world's way with its men and women to hope with any gravity that the Electoral

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Princess of Schlafingen would be any liker the May-girl of Sonnenburg than Philip O'Hagan of the Irish Guard was like the youth who had been her playmate.

So he had doubted, so he had feared, only to have all his doubts, all his fears dissipated by the first sound of her voice, by the first smile of her eyes. The spirit of the May-girl still lived in that radiant presence, the valiant candor of the child still shone like a glory round the head of the fair woman who had surely suffered, but who, as surely, had never sinned. All the devotion of his Celtic soul had been kindled by the sight of her. To think of her was to experience the exaltation of a spirit liberated from the demands of the flesh, and if he longed to pass his sword through the heart of Max, it was with no desire to destroy a rival, but only with the fierce wish to avenge an insult to one who should be above all evil thought or deed.

He was now within the shadow of the pavilion and slowly skirting its walls. All was still in the gardens; all seemed still in the villa. No light was visible in any of its windows, no sound was audible behind its walls. Had it been the palace of the sleeping beauty it could not have seemed to lie steeped in a deeper slumber. Philip moved slowly forward, and cautiously mounted the steps, watching, hopeful, holding his breath. Suddenly for an instant a thin line of light divided perpendicularly a part of the darkness above him, as a closely drawn curtain was for an instant sundered and a white figure glided on to

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the balcony of a window a little above his head. He knew that it was she and came nearer. The woman leaned out into the night.

"Philip!" she said, gently. "Philip!"

Philip was underneath the balcony.

"Here, dear lady."

The woman kept silence for a few seconds as if uncertain what to say. Then she spoke rapidly and low.

"Philip, dear Philip, I wanted to see you again to-night, for I wanted to know why you had come to Schlafingen."

She thought he was going to speak and put up her hand to check him.

"Wait! I feared—forgive me now, for you know me of old and know that I must always speak my mind—I feared that perhaps you might have heard tales that I was sad, perhaps that I needed consolation, and, hearing such things, might have thought that we two might perhaps take up again the love-tale we broke off so many years ago."

"Indeed," Philip began in honest protest, but again she stayed him.

"I know now why you came," she said. "My dear mad will-o'-the-wisp Swanhild has confessed to me. I know how rashly she wrote to you; I know how gallantly you answered the amazing summons. Dear Don Quixote, spurring the dusty highways to the relief of an unfortunate lady. Oh, it was brave of you, and good of you, and true of you, like the

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brave, good, true boy I knew once long ago, so long ago that I sometimes think it was all a dream. But it was very wrong of Swanhild to write, and I have scolded her for it. She is a whimsical, imaginative creature, and fancies all sorts of follies, but I am not the unfortunate lady of her figments, and, indeed, as the world goes, have but little to complain of."

"You were brave as a fair girl," said Philip, "and you are brave as a fair woman. It is not what I heard, but what I saw to-night, that makes me deny your denial."

Dorothea laughed, a little ghost of a laugh, with no mirth to give it substance.

"Men are not always courteous, friend Philip, but women are not always wise. If I had not taken offence I should not have been offended."

"Why should you suffer the least insult from such a man?" Philip asked, angrily. Again Dorothea raised her hand.

"Hush!" she said; "you are speaking of my husband. I have shut my eyes so often; why must I needs open them to-night? Oh, I will tell you why, friend Philip, it was because I had seen you, and, seeing you, had grown young again. I was a free girl again with my life before me, a girl in a garden with a beautiful world waiting for me outside its gates. Why did you come, friend Philip, to remind Dorothea of Schlafingen that she was once Dorothea of Sonnenburg?"

"I came," Philip answered, with a swelling heart,

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"because there seemed a chance that I might serve you; I came because I longed to see you again. Dorothea, Dorothea, whatever is left of worth in my life I devote to your service!"

"You will serve me best, friend Philip, by riding away and forgetting my existence."

"Why should I ride away? Is there no work that a man may do in Schlafingen?"

"You must ride away," Dorothea answered, with a sigh, "because if you were to remain here your staying would only serve to make us both unhappy."

"I could only be happy being near you, sometimes seeing you, sometimes hearing your voice."

Dorothea was silent awhile, and when at length she spoke, her voice sounded graver and more determined.

"I do not think you would be very happy. Philip, if you wish to please me, to serve me, you must ride away to-morrow. Do not plead with me. Obey. This night of our meeting must be the night of our parting."

"Dorothea, have pity," Philip cried, passionately, moved beyond his self-control. Dorothea heard the cry of his heart and she shivered, though the night air was very warm.

"You must go," she said; "if you honor me, if you love me, you must go. If you stay you will gain nothing, for I shall not see you again, and you know that I keep my word; but I shall only feel that I have lost a friend."

Philip hid his face in his hands. Was it for this

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that he had ridden, listening to the music of the tune of youth? To see her for a few moments, to renew the nobility of his soul, and then to lose her forever whether he went or whether he stayed, for he knew her well enough to feel sure that she would keep her word. Yet there was a sweetness in the very terms of this dismissal which might redeem a worst past with the hope of a nobler future. With that knowledge strong upon him he spoke.

"I honor you, Dorothea."

Then he was silent while he said to himself: "I love you, Dorothea," for he knew in his heart that she would have him love, but that she would not have him put his faith into words.

"I will do as you will, but I want your promise always to believe in me, and if ever you have need of me, to send for me, wherever I may be."

"I promise," she answered, softly. "Good-night, and good-bye."

She drew herself back as if to vanish, while he stood there in an agony, straining his sight to see the last of that white figure.

Suddenly the quiet was jarred by a distant noise of confused shoutings. Away in the distance, in the direction of the Electoral Palace, unsteady lights seemed to flicker in the darkness like a flutter of fire-flies.

Faintly in the stillness could be heard the noise of running feet. Dorothea leaned forward again. Philip, turning in the direction of the sounds, sought in-

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stinctively for his sword-hilt, to ease his blade in its scabbard. The ribbons of his sword-knot were somehow entangled, and impatiently, unconsciously, he plucked them free.

"What has happened?" he whispered to the woman above him. Dorothea, listening intently, caught a familiar sound among the nearing shouts, and she spoke at once, imperiously.

"Go at once!"

"Are you in danger?" Philip questioned, racked between his duty to obey and his duty to protect a woman from peril.

"I am in danger if they find you here, you, or any man. I am in no danger if you go. Obey me, or you destroy me. Through the trees you will find the road to the gate. It should be open still, but the password is 'Melusine.' Go!"

Instantly she disappeared behind the curtain and the pavilion was blank and black again. Philip could now see unsteady figures staggering down the alley, waving lights and crying meaningless cries, one at their head burlier than the rest, running silently.

The next moment Philip had leaped within the curtain of the trees and was speeding to the gate. He had not gone many seconds when Max and his companions straggled into the space before the pavilion.

Max's face was hideously white and his breath was wellnigh spent, but he turned to his companions with a new fury in his eyes, which made him forget, with

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drunken instability, the purpose of his coming and think only of the new rage at his heart.

"There was a man beneath the window!" he gasped, and then, his words following his thoughts—"there was a man in her room! Follow him—follow! Yonder he ran."

He pointed towards the sheltering trees, while his gaping associates tried to realize why they were there and what Prince Max was saying.

"Follow!" he shrieked again and staggered forward. He was blown by the run; his movements were unsteadier; his new fury did not stiffen him as his old rage had done. He struck his feet one against the other, stumbled, and fell sprawling on his face. As he clawed about to pick himself up again, for his friends were in no state to give him aid and could only sway about grinning and tittering emptily, his fingers closed on some bits of ribbon, and he rose to his feet holding in his hand the bow-knot of a sword.

"There was a man," he raved; "run to the gate and stay him. I'll question the jade."

Two of the men made an attempt to obey the prince's command and plunged between the trees, lurching and bumping against each other and the tree-trunks. Max faced to Dorothea's window, calling on her with foul names and with foul oaths to show herself. Then, as no answer came from the hushed pavilion, he reeled up the steps to the door and tugged impotently at the handle. The door was surely shut and truly bolted, and he might as well have tried to

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force his way through the solid wall. Wildly he began to hammer with the stick he still carried in his hand against the panels of the door, raining a shower of resounding blows and calling furiously upon anybody and everybody to let him in. The cane splintered in his fingers with the violence of the strokes, and he still battered away with the stump and still bellowed imprecations against a building that might have been a mausoleum in its indifferent silence. The pursuers were stumbling their way along the alley; those that remained were leering idiotically at the furious prince, and the women had squatted down upon the grass in their billowing hoops, and were alternately yawning and giggling. They had not the faintest idea of what was going forward; they only realized incoherently that the prince was very diverting and that it was pleasantly cool on the grass.

At this moment the Elector himself made his appearance, borne by sturdy, puffing varlets in his gaudy sedan-chair, on whose flamboyant panels naked graces languished.

Roused by the racket of the Ehrenberg, as he was tranquilly drinking his spiced night-cap, he had hurried grumbling into his dressing-gown and summoned his reluctant lackeys. The evident terror of the girl and her incoherent rendering of the threats of the Electoral Prince had convinced the Elector that his son was in one of his troublesome moods and that his personal intervention might be necessary to

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save the life of his daughter-in-law, for whom he cared a little, and the reputation of his state, for which he cared a great deal.

It was, therefore, the Elector, at once gorgeous and grotesque in brocaded silk and crimson slippers, who played the divinity out of the machine in the tragic farce that was being enacted at the foot of the pavilion. Max was still thumping at the heedless portal when the sound of his father's voice and the sight of his father's presence brought a pause to his labors. The squatting ladies scrambled to their feet, the lolling men recovered some erectness of carriage. The pair that had gone in pursuit, struggling back unsuccessful, came to a halt in astonishment and alarm as they beheld the Elector. The sight was not unalarming. On the edge of the bank stood the angry old man, his red face redder than custom under the white silk night-cap, which he had forgotten or disdained to doff, his burly, all-unbuttoned body partly draped in the floating robe whose colors vied with the plumage of some tropic bird, and behind him, grimly at attention, a company of the Elector's gigantic grenadiers, who, hastily summoned by his orders, had come from their guard-house at the double and were now ranged behind him.

"Curse you, sir," the old man roared, as the son turned his white face towards the red face of his parent. "What in the devil's name are you doing here at this hour of the night, dragging decent folk from their beds?"

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Max made to answer, but he faltered. At his drunkest and ugliest he was afraid of his father, and already the hotness of his intoxication was ebbing. While he hesitated, the curtains of the Princess's window parted and Dorothea came onto her balcony.

"Your serene highness," she called, clearly, to the Elector, "I appeal with confidence to your protection from those that have disturbed my rest and attempted to break into my dwelling."

The old Elector looked up at the woman with a kindly smile.

"Don't be afraid, Dollkin," he shouted; "he sha'n't hurt you while I am by, I promise you."

"Hurt her, curse her!" cried Max, whom the sight of his wife had wrung with new wrath; "it is she who has hurt me."

"Nonsense!" growled the Elector. "You had no right to force your doxy into her dance. Want of taste, son, want of tact."

Max's passion suddenly calmed into an ugly cunning. He would say nothing of what he had seen just then; he would leave his wife unsuspecting of his knowledge; he would wait till the morning to spin snares with a cooler wit.

His face was working unpleasantly, but though he parted his lips as if to speak no sound came from between them. He was sober enough now to think, to calculate, to plan. Unheeded, he thrust his left hand into his bosom, the hand that held the knot of ribbons his fingers had closed on when he fell. He

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drew out his hand empty and let it fall to his side, and there was that upon his countenance which a cynic or a misanthrope would have taken pleasure to call a smile.

"Perhaps I was wrong, sir," he said, lumpishly. "I was vexed and I had been drinking. But my wife has no right to defy my wishes or to deny me admittance. If I choose I will visit her at the head of a company of sappers."

"You are not pleasant company when you are drunk, Max," said the Elector. "I, on the contrary, am. That is the radical difference between us. And it is what a man does when he is drunk that counts, for a man isn't responsible in his sleep. Now beg your wife's pardon and come along with me to bed."

"I will come with you, sir," said Max, sullenly, "but I will not beg her pardon."

"Will you not, by God!" roared the Elector, in a blaze of rage, for he was tired, and the talking made him thirsty and the night air plied him with twinges. "Will you not? Then if you do not I will clap you under arrest, son though you be, and you shall sleep in the guard-house."

Max clinched the hand that clutched the bludgeon as if he would have hurled it at the speaker, but he stood like a stock and spoke no word. The Elector turned to the officer in command.

"Put his highness under arrest," he said, quietly.

The officer advanced towards Prince Max, and the

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Prince, who knew his father too well to goad him, lifted his hand.

"Stay, sir," he said; "I will do your bidding."

He turned and moved a few paces in the direction of the window where Dorothea stood statue-like in the night.

"Lady and wife," he said, making an awkward bow, and placing his left hand to the bosom of his coat where the knot of ribbon nestled unseen, "in obedience to my father's wish I tender you my regrets for having disturbed you so inopportunistically to-night. It was tactless; it was tasteless. I ask your pardon."

He gave her another clumsy salutation. Dorothea, looking down upon her husband, saw him clearly in the moonlight, saw his clothes dabbled with wine and rouge and mud, his face, pale above his ruined finery, set in a grin of stony malice. The words he had spoken were seemingly conformable to courtesy, but the tone in which he spoke them accentuated the double meaning that they carried. She shivered as she surveyed the scene before her—the bedraggled Prince with his party of muddled ruffians, and wantons holding stumps of candles; the old Elector fantastically apparelled against his background of rigid grenadiers. And she thought of the knight-errant who had brought back her youth to her mind and who had offered her his service. She bowed her head in response to her husband's words. She did not speak. Her heart was as cold as the hand that was pressed against it.

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"There," said the Elector; "that's done and well done. Come with me, son Max, and if you will take my advice you will drink no more to-night. Good-night, Dollkin."

"Good-night, your serene highness," Dorothea answered from her balcony. Then the Elector got into his chair, bidding his son walk by the side. Max's rabble scrambled back to the palace as well as they could, and soldiers closed the singular procession. All was quiet in the gardens of the pavilion, deserted save for the presence of a couple of grenadiers, left to guard the pavilion by the Elector, who did not place the slightest faith in any promise of his son's.

XII

THE "THREE KINGS"

THE inn of the "Three Kings" at Schlafingen was thought well of by travellers, better of by the inhabitants of the town, and best of by its proprietors. These were not, as so often happens in the case of your inn, tavern, hostelry, or auberge, man and wife, but brother and sister. Hans and Lischen were of the fourth generation in the direct line that had guided the fortunes of the "Three Kings," and it looked very likely that they would be the last. A Humperdienster had reigned over the "Three Kings," as Tamerlane had reigned over his bitted and bridled kings of Asia, since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and each in his generation had wooed, won, and wedded some comely burgess maiden of his own way of life, but always one that was well dowered—an essential to the wedding ceremonial in the eyes of a true Humperdienster—and the steady adherence to this principle had made the Humperdiensters, from sire to son, gather together a number of pretty pennies, thalers, ducats, nobles, and other minted moneys of all varieties and values which, placed in safe and

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shrewd hands in more than one capital of Europe, came to represent in the fulness of time a nest-egg which it would have taken a bird of the brood of the roc to hatch with any degree of comfort.

But when Hans Humperdienter and Lischen Humperdienter found themselves alone in the world, very mature orphans and absolute master and mistress of the historic "Three Kings," they had a solemn conference. Lischen announced to her brother that if he were desirous to wive she would not stand in his way or object to his bringing a young woman into the business to reign in her place. Hans most earnestly assured her that he had no desire and no intention to marry. He did not tell his sister the reason; he did not truly tell himself the reason. For it was a reason so preposterous that to confess it even to one's self would be, as it were, to propose and second one's candidature for the earliest vacancy in the nearest mad-house. Yet even the pretty, gray midges that wheel their day-long life in the summer air, shall they be blamed for adoring the sun? Shall the brown bats that fly by twilight be derided if they sigh for the moon, crescent or gibbous or on the wane? Thus in the privacy of his apartment, putting pen to paper, Hans Humperdienter had often sought to ease his sorrows with immortal verse, and he had certainly found the similes of the midges and the bats very soothing, for he habitually wore gray garments and his Sunday clothes were of an umber brown.

Did Lischen understand aught of her brother's

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noble woes? Did she realize that a man may be an innkeeper and yet house a spirit that may yearn for the daughters of kings? She did, but she kept her own counsel. She had a great regard for her brother. She thought him one of the best of men, which he most certainly was; she also thought him one of the most desirable in all wooable women's eyes, which he certainly was not. Yet with his honest heart and his fortune there were very few marriageable girls in all Schlafingen who would not have jumped, the prettiest and the pertest of them, to his humming, if he had hummed them a wedding-march. Lischen, knowing this far better than Hans did, took stock of his self-denying ordinance, and painted him in the chapel of her extravagant fancy as love's rarest, fairest, devil-may-care martyr.

For it was not to be denied that the angel of romance in her most extravagant apparel had entered the heart of the honest innkeeper and established her whimsical dominion there. Hans knew, and Lischen knew, and no one else save Hans and Lischen knew, that the innkeeper of the "Three Kings" cherished in his bosom an amazing flame. The brother never spoke of it to the sister; the sister never hinted at it to the brother; the pair took it for granted, tacitly, as sun-worshippers would take for granted the existence of the glowing god of their adoration. A high passion is uncontrollable by philosophy and smiles at social standing. If a cat may look at a king, what law of mortals may forbid your vintner,

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your simple innkeeper, to look upon a princess, and find her lovely to behold, and so finding her to set his foolish wits afire with the torch of the leveller? The thing was harmless; the thing was sane in its very insanity; it merely meant that one gray-coated burgess was, as it were, the temple of a celestial service. And there is the fable of the mouse and the lion. If a Will-o'-the-Wisp, frantic to aid her loved lady, should get some fitful glimpse of such a worshipful condition in one so humble, where could perplexed, distressed damsel find better messenger, envoy, ambassador extraordinary?

Will-o'-the-Wisp had some jewels—a few; Dorothea had some jewels—not a few, the gifts of her kinsfolk in the gloomy days when she was given to Prince Max. With some wild idea of making ready to escape from a tyranny that threatened to grow too aching and shameful to bear, Dorothea talked of selling her jewels that she might have some means of her own. Will-o'-the-Wisp Swanhild jumped at the notion, clubbed her jewels with those of her dear mistress—unknown to her dear mistress—and consulted discreetly the devoted Humperdienster. The devoted Humperdienster was all for Paris as the best market for jewelry. He had business in Paris, business connected with some portion of that nest-egg already alluded to; he would gladly do the business to pleasure Fräulein von Eltze. The name of Paris made Swanhild think of an Irish gentleman in the service of France, who had once been her lady's

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playmate. Often enough in sad reminiscence Dorothea had talked of the gardens of Sonnenburg and the fanciful gallant youth who had been her boyish lover. Then Will-o'-the-Wisp played her daring game, and confided not only jewels but letters to the chivalrous Humperdienster, who vanished for a season from Schlafingen with its bibulous Elector, its sleepy Electress, its crapulous Electoral Prince, and its taciturn hunting-man Prince Karl. Wherefore the "Three Kings" had for the time being a landlady but no landlord.

So when Philip O'Hagan halted in the court-yard of the "Three Kings" in the deepening dusk of a summer's day, there was no Hans Humperdienster to greet him with smiles and suavities and rubbings of the hands. In his place stood Lischen Humperdienster, apologizing for the absence of a brother whom Philip had never heard of and, as he thought, never seen, but explaining that she had received from that brother certain instructions for her guest's comfort which she would do her best to make good. After saying thus much she conducted him to his quarters, which proved to be a most comfortable suite of rooms in the quietest corner of the inn, and looking, not on to the noisy street, but on to a large and delicious fruit garden, whose ruddy wall ran out of sight to within measurable distance of the Elector's park. This garden had been one of the chief prides of the Humperdiensters since first they commenced inn-keeping.

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The first moment that Lischen Humperdienster found herself alone with her new customer—for Teague had been despatched to superintend the care of the horses—she produced from her pocket a letter which she told Philip had been intrusted to her to present to him on his arrival. This letter contained a card of invitation to the ball at the palace that night, and also a few lines in a woman's hand, now familiar, bidding him to be at a certain hour by the image of the Triton at the head of the canal in the Electoral Park. Philip thanked his hostess, commanded supper, ate it when it was ready in his private apartment with something of a traveller's satisfaction, though his mind was too agitated by the eccentricity of his adventure and his fantastic anticipations to allow him to do due justice to Lischen Humperdienster's genius for housekeeping.

Dusk had deepened into dark, and Philip had departed for the palace, and the streets of Schlafingen were beginning to present an unusual appearance, owing to the groups of masqueraders that went their way along them in the same direction, when a second traveller made his appearance at the door of the "Three Kings." The new-comer's face was fringed with a red beard and whiskers; the new-comer was muffled to the nose by the collar of his cloak; his hat was drawn low over a head of curly red hair; all that Lischen Humperdienster could discern of him was a pair of audacious, wheedling, domineering eyes, that coaxed their way into her

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maiden heart before ever their owner spoke her a word. It was not for nothing that a traveller from Paris had accomplished on the road a metamorphosis worthy of Master Ovid at his best.

The new-comer soon learned, without seeming inquisitive, all that he desired to know. A traveller had preceded him, a traveller who had already supped and had temporarily quitted the "Three Kings." Where had he gone that he could quit so pleasant a shelter? Why, to the masquerade at the palace. Did not Mein Herr know that there was a masquerade at the palace? Mein Herr knew nothing; Mein Herr had come from far away; Mein Herr envied his predecessor with an evening's entertainment ahead of him. Was there no way for a stranger to come at the jollities?

Spinster Humperdienster pinched her chin; she took kindly to the voluble voyager. In a small way she wished him well. Had he come a few days earlier there would have been no difficulty; any stranger of distinction could on proper showing win an invitation from the chamberlain. It was too late for that now—at this the stranger sighed heavily—still there might after all be a way. Here the stranger brightened amazingly. In spinster Humperdienster's parlor there were two tickets for the merry-making, ornate copper-plates, heraldic, allegorical, floriated, which had come for her and her brother as honest burgesses of long standing in the town. Resting on her mantel-piece they regaled her vision, lifting her

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from an inn parlor to the fellowship of the great. Had her brother been at home she might have consented to wear mask and hood and take his arm for a smile at the fire-works and a peep at the Princess—his Princess, their Princess. As it was, her brother was away, and she stayed by her hearth contented. He was away, as she guessed—nay, as she knew, though nothing had been said of it between them—on great business, state business, the business of the one, the only.

Under these conditions benevolence besieged her spirit, and after some tugging of the heart-strings, she very affably offered to give her visitor one of the precious cards. Her visitor, delighted in his gratitude, offered to act as her escort, but the good woman shook her head. If Hans could not go, being better employed, Lischen would not go neither, being well employed in thinking of him and his mission. Relieved at this, the stranger showed no sign of relief, though he had steadfastly resolved, had she accepted, to lose her in the crowd at the earliest opportunity. He regretted politely her firmness of heart, thanked politely her kindness of spirit, and then, attacked by an afterthought, asked the good dame if there were any place in the town where he might get him a masking-habit.

There proved to be such a place, for the little town boasted a little theatre, and the little theatre had a costumer who always had some frippery in his wardrobe, and just now had been doing a roaring trade in

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masks and dominoes, noses and beards. Thither tripped the nimble visitor, and presently returned the poorer for some silver pieces and the richer for a large parcel carried under his arm, which he conveyed to his apartment and smuggled under lock and key.

He supped well, though his beard seemed to trouble him, and more than once he put his hand to his head as if making to remove thence some cap or hat that irked him, and brought the hand back empty. He supped well, but he supped speedily; then skipped to his chamber, and presently came gingerly down the stairs all swaddled in a great cloak, and with a mask on his face, and so out-of-doors into the quiet, moonlit, starlit, lamplit night, making for the palace.

Spinster Humperdienster, sitting in her parlor and playing patience, congratulated herself on having in one evening received two such pleasant-spoken guests. How merrily the first-comer had desired to see the fun! How gently the second had asked for letters! No, now she remembered, of course it was the first-comer who asked for letters, and the second who desired to see the masquerade. This recollection made spinster Humperdienster, without attaching any significance to the fact, take note there and then that the voices of the two guests resembled each other very remarkably. After which reflection the two guests faded from the dame's mind, and she busied herself with her game until it was time for posset and bed.

On such a night the gravity of the inn rules was

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reasonably relaxed. A servant yawned by the bolted door, ready to unbolt when the two guests of the "Three Kings" returned from the revels. That servant only unbolted to a call once, when he admitted the first traveller, who civilly wished him a late good-night, and gave him a comfortable coin. He had wakened from a fitful sleep in a cramped position to find the morning sunlight in the hall; he had opened the inn doors for the day before he remembered that he could not remember how or when the second traveller had made his appearance.

XIII

ONE IN A WARDROBE

PHILIP O'HAGAN woke early in the morning following the masquerade, after a few hours of uneasy and unrefreshing sleep teased by ugly dreams. At first, as is usual with those that wake in a strange place, he did not know where he was. Then suddenly he remembered, and instantly the events of the past night lived in his memory. With a heavy heart he recalled that she had commanded him to leave Schlafingen, that she had told him how if he stayed he need not hope to see her again. Yet though he had no thought that she might change her mind he resolved that he would not depart at once. He would linger out the morning at least, in the hope of hearing some news from the palace, in the hope of receiving some surety of Dorothea's welfare. He felt confident that Swanhild would send him some message. Possibly she might even contrive an interview with him, from which he might learn what had happened after his departure, and how far resentment for the affront to his wanton might inspire the malice of the Electoral Prince.

Philip had experienced no difficulty in escaping

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from the precincts of the park after his interrupted interview with Dorothea. The gates were still open, and the sentinel's challenge was promptly answered by the password. Bitterly Philip regretted the necessity which compelled him thus to retreat, and his morning mind fed upon the humiliation, and found it just as bitter as it had seemed in the fierce ignominy of experience. What would he not have given for a quiet place and a naked sword, and Max opposite to him, like weaponed and like purposed, that one of the two should kill the other. But, indeed, Philip felt confident that his sword would prove the sword of justice to strike the offender down.

Philip tried to breakfast in the room where he had supped the night before, the living-room of the apartment reserved for him, a stately room for an inn, and a fragrant, for its open windows looked over that orchard garden of which the Humperdiens were proud, and from which now a confused company of sweet smells floated into the chamber on the vans of the June breeze. He breathed the summer air in sadness; he drew in the perfume of flower and leaf in tribulation of spirit. What was the good of summer and its gifts to one whose way seemed now to lie through an avenue of withered trees amid fields of ceaseless winter?

His sorry thoughts were too much for him. He left his breakfast almost untasted, to the despair of Teague, and decided to go for a walk while Teague

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got the horses ready for departure. Departure! He sighed at the word and wished the morning wind might blow all memory from his brain.

Teague was profoundly discomfited by his master's black humor. One thing Teague was resolved upon. He would leave the rejected breakfast where it lay. By-an-by, perhaps, he suggested, when Master Philip came back, the raw of the morning might have made him more in tune for some slices of fine ham and some glasses of red wine. Thus resolving, Teague left the table as it stood and quitted the room to look after the horses, and also to pursue a little gallivanting with a maid of the inn who had captured his vagrom fancy. Soon after, Philip, still leaving the breakfast sternly alone, went out into the quiet sunlit streets of the little town and drifted idly along the river, absorbed in melancholy thoughts.

For a while the room lay empty. The sunshine rippled over the room; the summer air blowing through the open window brought with it the treasures of sweet scent that it had stolen from flowers and fruit in the garden and scattered them generously around. It would have been a thousand pities that such a pleasant room should long remain unoccupied, and indeed it did not long remain unoccupied. But its new occupant entered the pleasant room, not by the door, but by the way of the sunshine and the scented air, the way of the open window. Some one came very quietly through the quiet garden, some one shifted a gardener's ladder to the sill of Philip's win-

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dow, some one cautiously ascended the ladder, and then a face that might have been Philip O'Hagan's, but was the face of John O'Hagan, looked into the room.

Seeing nobody there, John scrambled through the window and looked about him. Then he tiptoed towards the bedroom door, opened it gingerly, and peeped into an empty room. John returned to the sitting-room thoughtfully. "Philip is up betimes," he murmured, then allowed his gaze to dwell caressingly on the well-plenished breakfast-table. "I'll be for having a slice of that ham," he said to himself, and had it. The grateful saltiness reminded him of an abiding thirst, and he helped himself to two generous glasses of a merry red wine for which Schlafingen was famous. Then he felt better. An O'Hagan never felt tired, but if such a base feeling could have been harbored by any of that house it might have been pardoned to John that morning. People supped late and long at Allegresse; people played high and deep at Allegresse; at Allegresse, too, people wandered much through charming gardens in the cool dawn, and made love with very practical sentimentality in green boscajes.

John had made his escape with difficulty from clinging arms, inviting lips, and alluring eyes. He had taken advantage of an impromptu game of hide-and-seek to scale a back gate. He had walked all the way from Allegresse, singing "The Red Fox" as he strode, to the astonishment of early peasants. He

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had entered the territory of the "Three Kings" by way of the garden and had been tempted by the conjunction of an open window and a gardener's ladder informally to enter Philip's room, whose location he had learned the night before, and take him, as he judged, unawares in his bed. And now he had judged wrongly; Philip was as matinal as he, and had left behind him an untasted breakfast. At least, John could repair that wrong, amend that error. While he mused he munched, while he dreamed he drank. How good the white bread was, and the red wine and the provocative ham, that stimulated hunger and thirst alike!

But while John ate and drank his mind was not idle. He wanted to take Philip by surprise—and how best might the thing be done? To remain where he was would never do. Philip might come upon him unawares and see him too soon. He denied a proposal to hide in the bedroom; he might be found there by a servant and forced to a premature avowal. He eyed the great wardrobe over against the wall affectionately. It was a huge thing with two great doors; it looked as if it might conceal a giant. John took another glass of wine, then rising, crossed the room and proceeded to inspect the wardrobe.

The key was in the lock. John turned it and pulling the big doors apart peered into the roomy gloom. A couple of coats hung on pegs in a corner, otherwise it was empty, and obviously vast enough

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to conceal a man with ease. John thrust his head further into the cavity, whistling in his glee. Thanks to his position and thanks to his whistling he did not hear a decorous tap at the door, did not hear the tap repeated, did not hear the door handle tried and turned, did not hear the door open. So when John, chuckling at having found a comfortable lurking place, withdrew his head and shoulders from the cave of the wardrobe, he discovered to his surprise and chagrin that he was not alone in the room. A pink-faced, fair-haired gentleman of a stiff carriage, soberly habited in a chocolate-colored suit, was staring at him with a pair of interrogative blue eyes. John gaped at him, taken unawares, but as the stranger extended his hand with an air of diffident cordiality John returned the salutation and made to recover his composure.

"Sir," said the florid gentleman, speaking his French with a flagrantly Britannic accent, "I trust I find you well and none the worse for the pleasures of last night."

There was no such prim, pink-cheeked figure at Allegresse last night, of that John was very certain; he was also certain that the stranger claimed his acquaintance believing him to be brother Philip, and that the pleasures he referred to were the pleasures of the Elector's park. He answered at once with joviality and truth:

"I never felt better in the whole course of my life, thank you kindly, and if I had not got my head stuck

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into that clothes-box yonder I should not have had the seeming unpoliteness to show you my back when you did me the honor to pay me a visit."

Mr. Banbury gently deprecated the Irishman's flamboyant excuses.

"It is for me to apologize," he asserted, "for venturing to intrude upon your privacy. But when I knocked twice and got no answer I still felt that my business was so pressing that I would even take the liberty of entering to await your return."

John eyed the Englishman a thought gloomily. Had he come to borrow money, he wondered, or to claim money due. Generous though he was, he was not disposed to the first possibility at the moment; for the second possibility he was at no time disposed. Somehow the stranger's bearing did not suggest monetary need.

"I call it vastly kind and friendly of you, and no liberty at all," he protested, heartily. "Won't you be seated?"

He pointed with a flowing gesture to an arm-chair, in which Mr. Banbury seated himself stiffly.

"Sir," Mr. Banbury began, austerely, "I come on no pleasant business, albeit I come in a friendly spirit. Some while ago we had a difference as to the relative merits of the county Surrey and the county Cork—let that pass for the nonce. We can resume those geographical discussions hereafter, at our leisure."

"Begad, we can!" John assented, heartily. He did

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not know what the deuce his unknown friend was talking about, but plainly it concerned Philip's interests, and therefore it behooved him to be wary. Mr. Banbury's speech rolled solemnly on.

"It would be unbecoming of me in my position here to make any comment upon any members of the illustrious family who sway the destinies of Schlafingen, but at the same time I am well aware that you were a witness of his highness's little ebullition of temper last night."

"I was," said John, as emphatically as truthfully. He did not think it necessary to add that he was a witness while he lay on his stomach in the arbutus shrubbery and peeped through the leaves.

"It seems," Mr. Banbury went on monotonously, "that some one, feeling a natural sympathy for the painful position of her serene highness, was at once so chivalrous and so ill-advised as to proffer consolation beneath the window of her pavilion at an advanced hour of the morning."

Mr. Banbury's voice was very grave. Mr. Banbury's pink face was pinker. John began to imagine dimly the things that had happened while he made merry at Allegresse.

"I am glad you say chivalrous," he murmured, eager for more news. Mr. Banbury was his man for that.

"I say chivalrous and I mean chivalrous," he asserted; "but I also say ill-advised and mean ill-advised. These are not the days of King Priam and

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the Knights of the Round Table, and when the gentleman serenades the lady in the thick of the midnight, it is unfortunate, if not unusual, that he should be surprised by the husband."

"Very unfortunate," John whispered from dry lips. What had happened to Philip, he asked himself, and then conjured his fears with the reflection that the affable visitor took him to be Philip, and that, therefore, in his interlocutor's mind, Philip was for the moment out of danger.

"While under the circumstances," Mr. Banbury resumed, "I applaud the gentleman's alacrity in retiring, I deplore his obtuseness in leaving behind him any token of his presence—a sword-knot, as I believe," he added, after a brief pause.

Now, John did not happen to wear a sword-knot, so he fitted the case patly. Mr. Banbury smiled phlegmatically and went on with his commentary.

"It is not to be denied that there is some tattle in the palace, even that there is some babble in the town. Naughty news flies fast in a little place like this, and it is blown abroad with great freedom that his serene highness the Electoral Prince is in a devil of a tantrum. I know these things because in my position it is my business to see everything, to hear everything, to know everything. I hope it is no infringement of my diplomatic duties to add that I should like to suggest to a certain chivalrous gentleman that it might be well, in the interests of a certain august lady, for him to make himself scarce."

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The epilogue was not so impressive as the prologue, but both served their turn in accentuating for John the sense of danger to Philip. A cloud of conjectures muddled his mind. One thing seemed imperative. He must get rid of this friendly, pompous, garrulous Englishman. It would never do if Philip were to walk in and find them colloquing together and spoil the whole scheme that John was vaguely shaping in his brain. In a twinkling he rose to his feet, and Mr. Banbury, always formal, always scrupulous, instantly did the like.

"My dear sir" said John, "you have done a certain gentleman that shall be nameless"—and here he winked roguishly at Banbury, who did not return the signal—"a service for which he will always be indebted to you. And his first proof of that indebtedness is to suggest that it would be well if you compromised yourself no further by keeping his company."

"You are in the right there," murmured Mr. Banbury, horribly conscious of the delicacy of his position; "if you will allow me I will take my leave."

He made for the door, but John intercepted him. Luck might have it that Philip would be coming in as the Englishman was going out and so spoil all.

"It goes against the grain," he protested, "to urge any gentleman to quit the shelter of my modest roof, and still more to suggest to him how he should leave that shelter, but at the same time, I think it would be

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wiser, diplomatically speaking, if he left by another road from that by which he came."

Mr. Banbury, swimming deliciously in an ether of mystery and intrigue, cordially agreed with him.

"Is there another exit from this chamber?" he questioned.

"There is," said John. "Some boy of a gardener put his ladder forinst my window this morning, for the trailing of creepers, belike. If you would condescend to so discreet a vehicle, you might skip through the garden and make home again and nobody be a pennyworth the wiser."

The hint jumped with Banbury's wish. Strictly speaking, he ought not to have come at all; if, therefore, he could keep his coming hid by a mysterious departure, so much the better. He looked at the ladder; it was solid. He looked at the garden; it was no great distance from the window. He gravely bade John good-day, assured him of his sympathy and friendship until such time as the question of the relative merits of Cork and Surrey could be more seriously considered. Then climbing over the sill on to the ladder, he descended into the garden and disappeared.

When his visitor had vanished, John first smiled and then frowned. Philip was undoubtedly getting into a scrape, and it was altogether very lucky that he had come along to help him out of it. But he did not clearly understand the conditions of the scrape nor the precise form that his assistance was

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to take, and he helped himself to another glass of the delicate red wine to give his wits a fillip.

His puzzled meditations were interrupted by the sound of footsteps on the stairs outside. Instantly John sprang for cover, twitched apart the doors of the wardrobe, and ensconced himself in its depths, leaving one of the doors a little open so as to be able to survey the room. His strategic action was barely completed when the steps outside passed from the stairs to the passage. Then the door of the room opened and John gave a gasp of joy, for Philip entered the room, though John was inclined to groan, too, to see the gravity on Philip's face. But John did not emerge from his hiding-place, because Teague trod at his master's heels, and John wished his meeting with his brother to be without witness. So he waited where he was while Philip flung himself into a chair, while Teague busied himself with the business of removing the breakfast, smiling broadly as he did so to find that his master had done better with the viands than his dejected appearance would give reason to believe. Balancing the tray dexterously, Teague, still grinning, made to leave the chamber. Indeed, the door had closed upon him, and John was just widening the aperture of the wardrobe to emerge upon his astonishing brother, when the door of the room swung open again. With an oath none the less vigorous for being limited to the silent vehicle of thought, John once again bobbed back into his burrow, and, peeping through the permissible chink,

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observed that the landlady of the "Three Kings" had entered and was dipping decorous courtesies to Philip, who had risen wearily from his chair when he perceived who it was that had disturbed his melancholy cogitations.

XIV

"THE KNIGHT OF THE FLOWERS"

MISTRESS HUMPERDIENSTER looked demure, but there was a kind of twinkle in her eye as she spoke.

"There are a couple of country girls below, who say that they have brought some flowers for your excellency."

"Flowers!" Philip repeated, dully, and stared at his hostess. His griefs had confused his consciousness of every-day realities. "Flowers!"

"They say your excellency ordered flowers," Mistress Humperdienster replied, "and they have brought their wares for your excellency to choose from."

As a man that wakes from a heavy dream suddenly realizes a waking world and its alacrities, so Philip suddenly realized that these flower-girls might have a meaning of their own. Possibly one of them bore a message from Swanhild.

"I had forgotten," he protested, hastily; "truly I had forgotten. Pray send them hither!"

Brother John, lodged in his hollow place, was puzzled by Philip's alertness. While he wondered,

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Mistress Humperdinsten withdrew, and it was evident that the flower-girls she spoke of must have been waiting in the passage, close on her heels, for before the man in the room and the man in the wardrobe realized that she had gone, the door opened again and gave entrance to two country girls, of a very neat humbleness of attire, with shawls about their heads, so twisted as completely to conceal their faces. Large baskets of country flowers hung on their crooked elbows.

Philip rose anew from his chair as the girls entered and saluted them nervously. The women waited by the door in an awkward silence, hanging their veiled heads. John, in his concealment, rubbed his chin and speculated furiously. As the visitors seemed resolved to remain as mute as Memnon before sunrise, Philip broke the silence.

“You wished to see me?” he questioned, eagerly. “Have you some message to deliver to me?”

The girls put their hooded heads together in a conspiracy of whispers. Each of them seemed to be urging the other to overcome reluctance and speak, and each seemed coyly reluctant to obey the other's urgencies, and all the while Philip, politely expectant, burned with impatience, as for that matter did John in his sequestration. At last one of the pair of girls, seemingly summoning courage enough for the furtherance of the adventure, advanced towards Philip, and, taking up a little posy of flowers that lay on the top of the other blooms as-

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sembled in her basket, flung it, with a timid boldness, on the table just in front of Philip, who seized upon it avidly. The other girl meanwhile slipped towards the open window and seemed to be wholly absorbed in contemplation of the garden that lay below.

Now John began to feel horribly embarrassed. He could not join the company—that was out of the question; neither could he escape from his intrenchment unseen, and yet while he remained in his wardrobe it was impossible for him not to overhear any conversation that might pass in the room. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that the abiding presence of the second woman precluded any possibility of gallantry in the episode, and resigned himself to his position of witness in spite of himself.

Meanwhile, Philip was busy with the mysterious gift.

"Is this your message?" he asked of his hooded visitor, seeking eagerly the while if the nosegay concealed any scrap of written paper. The girl nodded in affirmation of his question, but Philip could discover no shred of writing lurking among the pretty blossoms.

"Is that your message?" Philip asked again, and again the silent girl nodded, and again Philip fruitlessly examined the little bunch of flowers.

"Have you no other message for me?" he inquired, and still the girl kept silence, but this time she shook her head. Suddenly a possible key to the riddle came into Philip's mind, and he scrutinized his posy more

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attentively. There to his hand lay pinks, with a sprig of rosemary, and the lower half of a leaf of laurel that had been cut in twain, and a white rose that was at the core of the posy, together with a stem of stinging nettle.

Philip turned from the cryptic nosegay to the still and silent watcher.

"I am not very flower-wise," he said; "but I find here rosemary, which, as I think, asks me if I remember."

The girl by the table nodded. Philip continued his thoughtful search.

"Remember what? Here are pinks, and they mean fidelity. Do I remember my fidelity?"

Again the girl inclined her hooded head and rested one hand against the table as if to steady herself. Philip touched the white rose.

"My fidelity to the white rose, to the white rose of the world? Indeed and indeed I remember that with every hour and every minute of the day."

The girl still said nothing, but she pointed to where Philip had scattered on the table the other elements that went to the making of the mysterious missive. Philip bent over them, guessing at their secret meanings.

"Here is a stem of nettle, which, as I think, means danger. Here is a chipped laurel leaf. Now the laurel stands for glory, but shredded thus it would seem to threaten little glory to him who shall remember his fidelity to the white rose of the world."

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Again the veiled girl nodded, and now Philip laughed and huddled the little heap of leaves and petals together and pushed them on one side.

"Here the message does not concern me," he said, gladly, "for the greatest glory I can hope for from here to world's end is my fidelity to the white rose of Schlafingen."

This time the girl began to laugh very softly and sweetly, swaying a little against the table as she did so, and Philip stared at her in a wonder which ended when she spoke, being slain by a greater wonder. For though all that she said was, "I think we must name you the Knight of the Flowers," her voice had the heavenliest sound to Philip's ears, and instantly he fell on one knee before her as she drew the shawl from her face and smiled down upon him where he stayed at her feet.

Now the curious fact was, explain it how you will, that while Philip was taken by surprise, hiding John was not. Philip, heavy with his care, thought only of the flower-girl as a messenger from his queen, perhaps the Diana-lady of the previous night; anyway, one whose identity concerned him little if she wished to keep it concealed. But John, less troubled spectator, felt confident from the first that the colored shawl of the seeming peasant muffled the fair beauty of the Electoral Princess. But if John was not surprised, also John did not rejoice.

Dorothea held out her hand to Philip, and he caught it and kissed it reverently, and then she drew him

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to his feet. She was laughing now unrestrainedly, laughing till her eyes were wet, and, indeed, tears seemed the proper tribute to such laughter, that had so little mirth in it. At the sound of that laughter hiding John's heart ached. At the sound of that laughter the girl at the window turned her head for a moment in the direction of the Princess and then resumed her silent contemplation of the inn's garden. But Dorothea went on laughing as if life were blithe for her, while Philip gazed at her, troubled by his delight and her merriment.

"Have I not fooled you?" she asked, and then, "Have I frightened you, Philip, that you stare at me so? Do you think I am out of my senses?"

She was laughing so that she could scarcely stand. Philip quickly brought a chair for her, and she sank into it wearily, though she still looked up into his anxious face and laughed.

"Well, Philip, have you nothing amazing to say to this amazing visit?"

"There are no words in the world proper for my joy in seeing you," Philip answered. "I did not dream, I did not dare to hope that I should see you again."

Dorothea wore for a moment an air of gravity that was less pathetic than her laughter.

"A woman may feel wisely overnight," she asserted, "and change her mind before morning."

She began to laugh again.

"I suppose you will think you ought to scold me,

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my Knight of the Flowers, for paying you a visit in this mad, unceremonious way, and playing this silly trick, but even a staid lady must be merry sometimes, and I am mad and merry this morning, so you will merely waste your breath if you scold me, for I shall only laugh in your face."

It seemed to Philip, as it seemed to hiding John, that she did not stay from laughter simply because she could not cease. Philip guessed that something grim must have happened to gain him this strange visit and show her in these strange spirits. He pretended to chime with her assumed humor.

"Why should I scold you for honoring a poor soldier of fortune so highly? I shall carry myself hereafter like a marshal of France, I promise you."

He spoke lightly, but his heart was afire with anxiety, and care reigned in his eyes while his lip smiled. Dorothea was still laughing spasmodically while he spoke, but when he had finished she caught at the edge of the table with both hands and clutched it hard as if to brace her strength and compel composure.

"Philip," she said, and her voice was sober now, all the laughter strained out of it and out of her wild eyes. "Philip, you said last evening that you were my servant, my soldier, my knight. Was that folly of starlight, or the gospel according to Philip?"

She scanned his face eagerly as she spoke, and must have read there his homage and his faith.

"Madame," Philip answered, with the firmness of

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one that asserts an unquestionable fact, "I am your servant and your soldier to the end of the story."

Dorothea set her elbows on the table and, nestling her face in her hands, looked piteously at him.

"Philip," she said, slowly, "I want to get away from this place." She paused for a moment and tapped on the table nervously with the tips of her fingers, little drum-calls to encourage her confession. "Last night I believed I could live out my miserable life here, but now I want to escape." She thrust out her hands towards him, fiercely, in appeal. "Will you help me to escape?"

A new joy throbbed in Philip's heart, a new joy that fought with a new horror.

"I will do anything you wish," he answered; "but what has happened since I saw you?"

Dorothea answered him calmly, much as a child might repeat a distasteful lesson that it had learned by heart.

"My husband paid me a visit last night. He came to command me to humble myself before his latest mistress, and, if I refused, to beat me into submission. But he thought he saw some one leaving my window, and his rage and hate ran a new course. The Elector came and saved me from a madman. The Electress is no help, and the Elector is old; the Elector is not to be relied upon, and now I want to escape, for if I cannot escape, I think, God forgive me, that I shall kill myself."

Philip listened to her with a rigid face. He was

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praying for the hour that would deliver Prince Max into his hands, but there was no time now to waste in words or thoughts of vengeance.

"Whither would you escape?" he asked, quietly, as if the escape of a princess of Schlafingen from her husband's side and the Elector's court were the easiest business in the world, that had but to be named to be undertaken, and undertaken to be carried out.

"I would go to Sonnenburg," Dorothea answered, "to my father's house. I think I should be safe there. I want you to go to Sonnenburg and see my father and win his consent to my coming. It will vex him, I fear, but for sure he loves me still. Then you must make the plans to set me free, for, Philip, my mind has withered in this place, and I cannot think, and I feel as helpless as a child."

Then she hid her face and began to cry. It was pathetic to the concealed watcher to see the proud woman so broken, but to Philip in that instant her tears were less tragic than her laughter and he thanked Heaven that they had come.

"I will ride towards Sonnenburg to-day," he said, simply. "I will arrange everything. Be patient and have no fear, for indeed you shall escape."

Dorothea, buoyed by his confidence, withdrew her hands from her face, and, looking at Philip with swimming eyes, she seemed as if about to speak. John, who was longing to emerge from his concealment and offer himself as a second champion, only

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restrained himself by the thought of the astonishment his unexpected apparition would cause. So he, too, waited upon Dorothea's words. But what she would have said was stayed by the hurried movement from the window of the girl who had accompanied the Princess, and whose drawn-back shawl now revealed the face of Swanhild.

"Your highness," she cried in much surprise and some alarm, "Mr. Banbury is coming through the garden in a prodigious hurry."

Dorothea rose to her feet. Grief had faded from her face even as mirth had left it, and she met Swanhild's news with calm. Philip kept silence, busily thinking what this news might portend. John, in his cupboard, wondered who Mr. Banbury might be.

"Has our absence been noted?" Dorothea asked. "Have we been followed here?"

"Whatever Mr. Banbury comes for," Swanhild suggested, somewhat nervously, "I feel sure that he is to be relied upon as a friend."

She made another dart towards the window and came fluttering back with wide eyes.

"He is mounting a ladder that stands beneath this window," she gasped. "He is coming to this room. What shall we do?"

Philip had decided. He opened the door of the room and with a friendly imperativeness whisked the two women into the little passage.

"Wait here," he whispered. "If this visit means no danger to you I will clap my hands and you can

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escape as you came. Mistress Humperdienster is to be trusted?"

Dorothea nodded. Philip closed the door briskly and with a stride was at the table and in a chair as Mr. Banbury's face, even more florid than its wont, appeared above the window-sill, and a moment later Mr. Banbury came tumbling into the room, somewhat more out of breath and generally discomposed than was, he felt, befitting the dignity of an English diplomatist. Philip rose swiftly from his seat as if he had been taken by surprise.

XV

MR. BANBURY INTERVENES

MR. BANBURY was undoubtedly flustered, though he hated to think himself so, and to find himself so.

"A thousand apologies," he began, in answer to Philip's implied interrogation, "for again intruding upon your privacy, and this time so unceremoniously, but my news must be my excuse. I withdraw my former advice, given under different conditions and on imperfect information. You must not think of making yourself scarce. In fact, that is the very last thing you must think of doing."

Philip stared at him. Could the placid, the diplomatic Banbury have suddenly gone mad? That was unlikely. He was plainly brimming with warnings, but warnings against what?

"I do not understand—" Philip began, but Banbury interrupted him most informally.

"Even if you wished to make yourself scarce you could not do so now," he went on. "I have just ascertained by chance that every way out of Schlafingen is guarded. Any attempt to make yourself scarce, as I suggested, would be not merely fu-

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tile, but would be tantamount to a confession of guilt."

Though Philip was mystified, it was clear that something had happened which affected him, and he was about to entreat his visitor to explain, when to his dismay the door of the room opened and the two flower-girls entered the room. Before Philip could make a gesture to restrain her, Dorothea had advanced towards Banbury and addressed him.

"The Chevalier O'Hagan is in danger?" she asked. "I know some English and guessed so much. What is the danger?"

Mr. Banbury was somewhat short-sighted. Thus he had not seen Swanhild's head at the window when he made his hurried progress across the inn garden a few minutes earlier. But Dorothea was not so near to him that he could not fail to recognize her, in spite of her whimsical disguise, and he gaped in astonishment.

"Your highness," he stammered, his instantly adopted French sounding flagrantly Britannic even to his ears in his agitation. But he went no further. Dorothea took him up.

"I know you are a gentleman," she said. "I know I can trust to your discretion. What danger threatens the Chevalier O'Hagan?"

It was characteristic of her that she took no thought for herself, wasted no time in explanation of her presence there. What the Englishman might think did not trouble her. Her friend was menaced. She

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must know his peril, she must help him, if she could. Philip stood by with his hands clinched in anguish, confident indeed that he could rely upon Banbury's silence, longing to explain, but unable to do so in the face of Dorothea's calm indifference to the innuendo of the situation. As for Banbury, his troubled face brightened a little when he realized that the Princess had a companion and that the companion was his dear Diana of last night, the enchanting Swanhild.

"Your serene highness," he repeated, "a little while ago I thought it would be for the Chevalier's interests that he should leave Schlafingen as speedily as might be, in consequence of some talk I heard about an episode at the palace last night. But since then I have learned that some, no doubt unfounded, suspicions about the Chevalier have assumed a more pronounced shape in the minds of those that harbored them, and that in consequence steps have been taken to prevent the Chevalier from leaving the town."

Dorothea paled. She seemed about to speak, but Philip, heedless of etiquette, interposed. While much that Banbury was saying mystified him extremely, it was quite clear that a spirit of mischief was busy and that the first care was the Princess's safety.

"If your highness will permit me," he said, "the most immediate matter is your return to the palace."

He turned to Banbury and continued: "Her highness was polite enough to honor me with some commands for Paris—"

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But here Swanhild cheerfully interrupted, her bright eyes smiling enigmatically on Banbury, plying him with temptations, menaces, defiances, promises.

"Monsieur Banbury knows all about that. I wagered Mr. Banbury last night that her serene highness and I would successfully pass ourselves off upon the Chevalier O'Hagan as flower-girls this morning. I have won your gold pieces, excellent Monsieur Banbury."

Mr. Banbury blinked at her, admiring her wit and glibness, thinking she ought to be whipped for her impudence. But he said nothing, and, bowing stiffly, accepted the situation. Swanhild had secured a good witness if the Princess's indiscretion came to light.

Dorothea, impatient of this by-play, turned to Philip.

"I must be assured of your safety."

"Let your serene highness be at ease," Philip assured her. "I am in no conceivable danger. I am the soldier of a prince who protects his subjects, and I have committed no offence against the peace of Schlafingen."

He spoke with an airy conviction intended to dissipate her fears, but he grew graver as he again spoke of her.

"Your serene highness will permit her humble servant to entreat her to return at once to the palace. The little scheme for my mystification which you honored me by planning has proved successful, but the essence of a jest is brevity."

MR. BANBURY INTERVENES

Dorothea looked irresolute. Swanhild chimed in. "The Chevalier is right, your highness. Let us be trudging."

Here Mr. Banbury, who had been staring in admiration at Swanhild, made a voluntary sacrifice to beauty in a quandary.

"May I suggest to your highness," he began, "that it might be as well if you deigned to depart as I arrived, by this ladder and through the garden. One never knows who may be watching in the public street. By the garden you may gain by-ways. The ladder, I can assure you from experience, is no such difficult matter, and I will myself, with your permission, be your escort as far as the park and the pavilion."

Poor Mr. Banbury, for a prudent politician, was diving neck-deep in the imbroglio, but he was instantly rewarded by the flash of thanks in Swanhild's eyes.

"Mr. Banbury advises rightly," Philip said. "Farewell, Princess."

Dorothea held out her hand wistfully. Philip stooped and kissed it.

"You—" she began, and hesitated. Philip answered her unuttered question.

"I shall remain in Schlafingen for the present. I hope I may be permitted the honor to wait upon your serene highness to-morrow."

Dorothea bent her head. Swanhild was rightly all impatience to be gone. She addressed the entangled Banbury.

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"Monsieur Banbury, will you be so good as to descend to the garden and to contemplate the ground religiously while you hold the ladder steady."

Mr. Banbury instantly obeyed and disappeared from the chamber. John, from his retreat, got a glimpse of scarlet stockings as Swanhild whisked herself out of the window on to the first rung of the ladder, and a moment later the white stockings of Dorothea followed her example. Philip, standing by the window, saw the three figures fitting among the flowers to disappear in the depths of the garden. Then with a sigh he turned from the window and flung himself heavily into a chair to think over the astonishing events of the morning.

XVI

A GHOST FROM GREECE

HIS sour musings were strangely interrupted by the most astonishing event of that astonishing morning. The door of the great wardrobe against the wall opened and a man's form stepped out of it into the room. Philip, staggered and aghast, wondered in swift flashes of bewildered thought whether he were seeing his image in some mirror, gazing at his own fantastic double, or facing the ghost of his dead brother. Then the bewildering thing said, "Philip, my boy, how are you?" and illusion surrendered to amazing reality.

"John!" cried Philip, in a whirlwind of confusion, fear and hope, wonder and joy brawling for supremacy, "John!"

He had half risen from his chair as he spoke, but he was forced back into it again by strong hands set firmly upon his shoulders. They were his brother's hands, and his brother's face was looking down upon him with a glow of loving-kindness in the eyes.

"Little Philip," John murmured, tenderly, over the man of his own size, the man of his own strength, "forgive me, little Philip. Did I give you a fright?"

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Philip was so taken aback that he stammered and gasped like a laggard school-lad. John that was dead a year ago, John that he had wept for in secret, now to come thus from a wardrobe into his room at Schlafingen. It baffled credibility, and he could do nothing but gape and gabble inanities.

"Sure it's myself," John went on, and as he spoke the sound of his voice was transmuted in the listener's brain to many things—the roll of the Gaelic, and the smoke of the peat, and the "Come all ye" of the wandering singer, and the "stole away" of the hunting-chorus, and the talk round the watch-fires by night. "Sure it's myself, alive and hearty, and glad as a man can be to see you, little Philip."

"In God's name," faltered Philip, "how did you come here?"

John jerked his thumb in the direction of the open window.

"By the gardener's ladder," he answered, "which I found in the garden yonder. With the help of the Lord I have climbed over a wall."

The room still seemed to swim around Philip, but this practical answer did much to convince him of the reality of what at first seemed hallucination.

"But I heard you were dead and buried in Greece," he pleaded, in extenuation of the incredulity with which he had greeted his visitor.

"Devil a bit," John answered, jollily. "I was wounded, 'tis true, outside a little village in Peloponnesus which used long ago to be Argos. Just

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think of it! Do you remember how Father Dion, Heaven rest his soul, used to try to give me Latinity? Well, I pledge you my word, Philip, when I lay bleeding outside that little hole of a place, what should come into my mind but those lines about some Grecian fellow who gets knocked on the head in foreign parts, and, dying, remembers sweet Argos. Faith, I thought I was going to die and remember sweet Argos and be damned to her."

"But you didn't die," Philip commented. As a comment or as a question, his words were sufficiently meaningless, but he had not as yet got his breath, as it were, and did not know what to say.

"No," said John, complacently. "The luck of the O'Hagans. I mended when they said I was dead—sure I was always a contradictory devil—but as the news of my death had been set down in the despatches I thought it would be ungentlemanly to correct the errors of my superior officers, and besides, there were reasons, one, two, and three, why it was convenient for John O'Hagan to be out of the way."

Five minutes earlier it would have seemed impossible to Philip that he could occupy his mind with other thoughts that day than thoughts of Dorothea, and Schlafingen, and his mission to Sonnenburg. But this incredible resurrection had for the moment banished present cares and duties from his consciousness, and his brain was busy with the troubles of the past.

"For Heaven's sake, John," he entreated, "as you are alive and well, and here, for all of which I thank

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God, tell me the truth of that business in London. Did you kill a man in Hyde Park?"

"I did that same," John answered, composedly, and whistled a bar or two of "Lillibulero."

"But the story they told in Paris was that the man you killed was an unarmed man."

"Then they told a mighty big lie," John answered, as calmly as before. Philip reached out his hand and clasped John's in his.

"Don't suppose I ever doubted it," he said, "but it eases my mind about the man from whom I first heard the report."

"What about him?"

"Oh, nothing. He was sick for some weeks through falling on a sword-point. Tell me the tale, John."

"It's not much of a story," John answered, with sudden gravity. "It began when I was in Vienna. There was a little English girl I met at the Russian Embassy that took my fancy; she was so young and pretty and timid, Lord Oglethorpe's daughter, just over seventeen. Plenty of fellows were after her, for her wealth as well as herself, but the favored spark of the family was a damned blackguard named Gunn—Tom Gunn, of Langton, who was as rich as rich and as wicked as wicked. He was tempted by the child because she was so green and raw and because she hated him. Lord, how she must have hated him when she plucked up the courage to tell me so!"

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"Were you in love with her?" Philip asked. John shook his head sadly.

"What the devil should I be doing, falling in love with a little girl like Letty Oglethorpe? Besides, I think she was in love with some one else, who wasn't a penniless Irish rebel, and who may have been a decent fellow enough, from all she told me, though she didn't tell me much. The long and the short of it was, that I was so touched by the little maid's quandary—not that I was the least bit in love with her, you understand—that I thought I would have a chat with my fine Mr. Gunn. So when it came to putting up the banns for the Hon. Letitia Oglethorpe, and Thomas Gunn, Esquire, of Langton, why I slipped over to England, though it was as much as my life was worth to do that same."

"Was the girl very fair?" Philip asked, and John again nodded.

"She was pretty, and she was good, and she took to me as she might have taken to a big brother, if she had the luck to have one. And Tom Gunn was such a blackguard! I hid for a bit in London and found out his ways, so one morning as he was driving in his chariot in Hyde Park, as grand as you please, I rode up to his carriage window and made him a bow. You should have seen his face, for we were not exactly friends in Vienna.

"'Good-morning,' says I, with the height of politeness. 'We have not met since we were in Vienna together.'

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"He was silent for a bit, then he spits out like a turtle his 'What do you want with me?'"

"'A plain answer to a plain question,' says I. 'Do you mean to marry Miss Oglethorpe?'"

"'I do,' he says, and licks his lips."

"'I object to that same,' I says, still very polite, with my eye on his knave's face."

"'What the devil business is it of yours, you damned Rapparee,' he screams at me, and then he calls, 'Drive on, coachman,' for the man had reined in when I came up, thinking me his master's friend. He was for driving on now, but I soon settled that."

"'If you lift reins or whip I'll blow your brains out,' I promised him, and he sat as still as an image, though I could see he was looking for help. But we were in a quiet place, thanks be, and there was nobody by."

"'Now,' says I, to the rascal inside the coach, 'I want you to come out and cross swords with me to settle this little difference.'"

"'Then he began to curse me, and I told him a few plain truths, and we were both pretty warm. At last I says to him:

"'Will you fight,' I says, 'or must I pull you out by the scruff and make you?'"

"'I'll see you damned first, you bloody Tory,' he cries, and then without a word of warning he snatches a brace of pistols from under the cushion in front of him. 'Thieves!' he screams, and fires point-blank at me. It wasn't a bad shot, though I was a close

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mark enough, for the ball nipped my ear, and the least taste of a nicer aim would have settled me. Then I heard shouts, and in a kind of mist I saw Letty alone in a room with this thing, and I couldn't stand it, so I pulled a pistol from my holster and shot him dead where he sat. Then I rode for my life and took hiding, and got abroad in time, and so to serve against the Turks in Greece and to my death before sweet Argos. That's my story."

"What became of the girl?" Philip asked, thoughtfully.

John shook his head. "I don't know. I suppose she is married to somebody by now. Anyhow, I saved her from that satyr, thanks be."

Philip caught John's hand and pressed it brotherly. Then, the oddness of the adventure being somewhat smoothed off, he began to remember where he was, and to reflect that John being in Schlafingen was almost as remarkable as John being alive.

"What are you doing here, you good ghost?" he asked. "Why have you travelled to Schlafingen?"

John looked down upon Philip—he was sitting on the table by now, and Philip in his chair—and shook his head with a playful gravity. He felt very sure in that moment that he must be the elder brother.

"Why have you travelled to Schlafingen? That is more to the point, I think, little Philip."

Philip straightway gave John a simple account of why he had left Paris and of what had happened at Schlafingen, as far as he knew. John listened at-

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tentively, and when Philip had made an end, he told how he had learned of Philip's departure and how he had come to Schlafingen on his heels, and how he had changed his appearance on the way.

"I have heard something of the place and its ways and its dangers, and I thought you might get into mischief, and by the Lord I was right."

He was about to confess that during his imprisonment in the wardrobe he had been perforce a witness of the interview between Dorothea and Philip when the sound of a step on the stair interrupted him.

"They must not find two of us here," he whispered into his brother's ear. "By your leave."

He whisked into Philip's bedchamber just as a knock came to the door. Philip bade enter and pretended to be busy over some papers. The door opened and Mistress Humperdienster came into the room. The good woman's face was very white and frightened.

"Sir," she said, in a voice that was greatly agitated—"sir, Graf von Lutten is below."

"Well?" said Philip, quietly, though he knew very well that the purport of her words meant mischief.

"He desires to wait upon you," the alarmed woman went on. "He has his great gilt carriage at the door and a guard of soldiers, and, oh, sir, what is going to happen?"

"Nothing is going to happen," Philip said, reassuringly, though he knew very well that much was

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going to happen. "Will you present my respects to his excellency and say that I shall be pleased to receive him here."

Poor Mistress Humperdinst, her face all of a whimper, shuffled out of the room. In another instant Philip found John's left hand upon his shoulder. John's right hand held a somewhat crumpled red wig and whiskers. He had carried it in his breast-pocket all the night and all the morning.

"Get in there," John whispered, pointing to the bedroom he had just quitted, and before Philip could do more than look a question he went on: "I'll take your place, and go to the palace, for 'tis there I'm sure they want you. Inside there you must mount these whimsies"—and he pressed the red wig and its appendages into Philip's fingers. "There's a door gives onto the corridor. My room is at the end; the red room they call it. Wait there till I am gone, and then pay my scot as the gentleman in the red room, and be off to Sonnenburg as fast as you can. Now do as you are told; there is a darling."

It was clear to Philip that John's mad plan was unanswerably sane and excellent. With an apparent Philip O'Hagan abiding in Schlafingen, the real Philip O'Hagan would have absolute freedom to elaborate his schemes for the deliverance of the Princess. Yet he did not like the idea, for many reasons. He did not like to run away from danger. He did not like to leave his brother in his danger. But his chief reason was the thought that Dorothea

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would be deceived. John seemed to divine his thoughts.

"There's not a soul in this place that won't think I am Philip, barring one, and that one will keep the secret. Hark, there is some one coming up the stairs!"

There was no time to argue, to consider. Philip felt that it would be folly to resist, and yielded. "I shall be all right, my lad," John whispered. "The luck of the O'Hagans." He pushed Philip, still with the wig trailing from his fingers, into the bedroom and shut the door. Then flinging himself into Philip's chair, he stretched his legs comfortably and listened with a smile to the ascending footsteps.

XVII

GRAF VON LUTTEN

“COME in,” John called, cheerfully, when the expected knock came. Then the door opened and a gentleman entered the room, a gentleman habited soberly in black, but with a fine profusion of costly lace at his neck and wrists. He bowed solemnly to John, who rose and returned his salutation, thinking the while that this must be von Lutten, and that he looked the deuce of a rogue. Any doubt was promptly settled by the intruder’s speech.

“The Chevalier O’Hagan?” he said, interrogatively, and then acknowledging John’s affirmative bow presented himself.

“I am Graf von Lutten, minister to his serene highness the Electoral Prince, at your service.”

“Well, Graf,” asked John, affably, “what may your excellency be wanting with me?”

Von Lutten produced a snuff-box, proffered it to John, who politely declined, and then took a pinch himself delicately, flicking his lace ruffles daintily afterwards. So he had seen great seigneurs snuff at Versailles, and it was always von Lutten’s ambition to pass for a grand seigneur. It was known to very

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few that he was the illegitimate son of a turnkey. Von Lutten again brought his snuff-box under John's notice. It was adorned with a miniature, ringed in brilliants, of a red-faced, periwigged personage.

"My illustrious master," von Lutten explained with a reverent sigh. "A gift from his gracious fingers in return for some poor service I was able to render. Ah, it is a pride to serve so generous a prince."

"It must be that same," John concurred; "but did your excellency come all this way to show me a snuff-box?"

Von Lutten shook his powdered head.

"The Chevalier O'Hagan is a gentleman so justly distinguished as a votary of Mars—and, shall we add, of Venus—that it is a privilege to be permitted to pay him my respects."

He was talking very urbanely, and he seemed to be quite absorbed in his snuff-box and his compliments, but John was very confident that he was observing cunningly the while all that there was to observe in the room. However, it was a matter of complete indifference to John how long his visitor chose to protract a conversation which he felt sure would come to only one conclusion.

"Will you be taking anything this fine morning?" he hinted convivially, with a wave of his hand towards the bell-rope. Von Lutten deprecated refreshment and denied thirst with a polite gesture.

"Surely we may say a votary of Venus," he went

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on. "Surely one to whom the fair send floral tokens may be so named," and he pointed to where on the table lay the scattered components of Philip's enigmatical nosegay. "Dear me, if I know anything of the language of flowers—and I have been in the East, Chevalier, where they carry the art to excess—I should say there was some delicious mystery, some pretty intrigue, whispered at by these sprigs and petals. The faithful pink, the white rose, the nettle danger, what a telltale little bunch of meanings."

"Your excellency," said John, with insolent good-humor, "will you have the goodness to tell me why I am thus honored by your interest?"

"Chevalier," answered von Lutten, affably, "will you have the goodness to tell me what you did last evening, after the masquerade?"

John's sense of humor was so highly tickled by his memories of the previous evening, and the whimsicality which prompted von Lutten of all men to interrogate him, that he was very nearly compelled to laugh in the minister's face. But he kept his gravity with an effort.

"Faith," he said, "as between two gentlemen that understand the world, I think I must leave that question unanswered."

"In that case," said von Lutten, still suavely, "I must request the pleasure of your company for a little drive in a carriage."

"Indeed, and where to, your excellency?" John asked, with a well-feigned air of surprise.

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"To the palace," von Lutten answered, and slipped his snuff-box into his pocket with the air of a man who closes a conversation.

"Now suppose," suggested John, "that I were to say to your excellency that I had no inclination for an outing this morning at all, what would your excellency say to that?"

"I should say," von Lutten went on composedly, "that my desire for your company is so keen that to procure myself the pleasure I should even go to the length of summoning friends from below whose arguments would perhaps be more convincing than mine."

"To put it plainly," John asserted, jocosely, "I am a prisoner."

"To put it plainly," answered von Lutten, again producing his box and again taking snuff in the Versailles manner, "you are much wanted at the palace."

"In that case," said John, "I have no more to say, but I give you fair warning that I am a subject of his most Catholic majesty the King of France, and that I shall appeal to the protection of his representative."

Graf von Lutten made no answer to this threat, but merely smiled grimly, and flicked imaginary particles of snuff from his ruffles.

"Shall I be detained long at the palace?" John asked, haughtily. Von Lutten shrugged his shoulders and again consigned his snuff-box to his pocket.

"That depends upon the pleasure of his serene

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highness the Elector. In any case you need not trouble about your belongings here. If you should need any of your possessions they can be sent for hereafter."

John understood perfectly well that this meant a close perquisition into Philip's effects the moment his back was turned, and he chuckled inwardly to think that Philip was not likely to leave any compromising documents behind him.

"I will delay your excellency no longer," he said, and rose from his seat. "Let us be jogging."

He made to move towards the door, but von Lutten laid his hand, a coarse hand, in spite of all its owner's efforts to blanch it into aristocracy, upon John's arm and stayed him.

"Chevalier," he said, smoothly, "let us converse together as men of the world,"

"Devil take it!" John answered, impatiently, for the old rogue's suavity was beginning to vex him. "We couldn't very well talk as women of the world, could we?"

Von Lutten grinned, and his features when he grinned were not altogether agreeable to contemplate.

"You are facetious," he observed, dryly. "It is well to meet adversity with a merry heart. But it is prosperity, and not adversity, you would be journeying to meet, if you chose to make it so."

"What are you driving at?" John asked, something savagely. "No man seeks adversity willingly."

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Von Lutten's grin deepened and became more malignant to behold. But he spoke insinuatingly.

"The love of a great lady may be very flattering to the vanity, but the friendship of great princes is more gratifying to the pocket."

"Your excellency," said John, "you speak like a printed book, but how do your aphorisms apply to me?"

"Come, come," urged von Lutten, gently rallying, "there are plenty of pretty women in Europe. For my own part," he interpolated, musingly, "I do not find that princesses are more satisfactory than simpler creatures, and if you are willing to oblige a certain distinguished personage that may readily be nameless, you will have no lack of money to buy dainty dolls with."

"Please to talk more plainly, your excellency," said John. "I think my intelligence is a little hard of hearing to-day."

"Plainly, then," said von Lutten, visibly nettled, "if you are willing to confess where you spent last evening you will do a distinguished personage a service, and though it may be necessary to affect a severity towards you, believe me, you shall have no reason to repent your seasonable indiscretion."

John smiled sweetly into von Lutten's face, though his feet were dancing-mad to kick him.

"I can assure your excellency that I passed a very pleasant evening, but I am afraid that I cannot say more than that without more authoritative permission than you can accord."

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"Do you mean the distinguished personage to whom I have alluded," von Lutten asked, eagerly.

"Never mind whom I mean," John responded, cheerfully; "time will tell. And, meanwhile, we are wasting that same time. I solicit your excellency's escort to the palace."

With a wry smile von Lutten opened the door and requested John to precede him. John walked into the passage and went down the stairs humming the chorus of a hunting-song. When he came to the court-yard he found a small guard of soldiers in possession, and his excellency's gilt coach waiting outside. He climbed into the coach, followed by von Lutten; the soldiers formed into an escort on either side, and the whole procession moved slowly along the main street of the little town in the direction of the palace, while the inhabitants, crowding at windows and lounging at doors, watched the slow course of the gilt coach and the soldiers, and wondered what had happened.

All the way von Lutten discoursed glibly on the wisdom of pleasing the great, of the virtues and graces of his serene highness the Elector and his admirable son the Electoral Prince, and of the misfortunes that might come, even in the augustest circles, from unfortunate marriages. John allowed him to run on untrammelled, for every second word he said was in some sense a revelation to his hearer of the unfamiliar world he was about to enter.

One little principality is very much like another

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little principality in its broad effect; it is in the particulars that petty state varies from petty state, and it was with these very particulars that von Lutten in his zeal was possessing John. John knew something indeed, vaguely, of Schlafingen from hearsay, enough to know that it was neither a school of morals nor a temple of bliss, but he wished to know more, so kept his peace and let von Lutten prattle. Von Lutten fancied himself a Machiavelli, but he was a very pinchbeck, fifth-rate imitation of even the conventional conception of the Florentine, and his long-practised cunning was really no match for the seeming guilelessness of the soldier of fortune by his side. While von Lutten was hugging himself in the conceit that he was catching the Chevalier O'Hagan in his crafty nets, John was stiffening a frail knowledge of Schlafingen, gleaned from the chatter of a masquerade and garnered from the babble of Allegresse, with information dexterously elicited from a companion garrulous because he believed that garrulity was serving his turn, whereas it really served the turn of his antagonist.

By the end of his drive it seemed to him as if he had lived in the honest little town and in the wicked little court of Schlafingen for half his life. He knew the drunken old ruin of a stately soldier that was the Elector; he knew the maundering old woman, much given to eating and drinking and most of all given to sleeping, that had once been a beauty and a toast, and was now the Electress, fecund mother of

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children, many daughters married here and there and two sons, the Electoral Prince Max, sottish, lascivious ruffian, and Prince Karl that was laconic, and loved the chase and loved one woman to no purpose. For the woman was his sister-in-law, Dorothea, who liked the rough, rugged man, and was kind to him, but would have none of his love, though it was honest love of its kind, and very honest love for that place. Wherefore Prince Karl passed most of his time ahunting and the gaudy Electoral court saw little of him. John knew already, though his companion did not harp on this string, that the great power at court was Madame von Lutten, who pleased the Elector and pleased the Electoral Prince, and had always a niece or a kinswoman of some kind in readiness to solicit the smiles of the latter. In a word, John felt, and rightly felt, that he knew a good deal about Schlafingen by the time that he and his companion arrived at the Schloss.

It was evident to John, as he drove through the palace gates, that some little importance was attached to his capture. His experienced eye noted that the guard was doubled; he guessed that greater force was in readiness unseen. More and more he blessed his fortunate stars that had guided him to Schlafingen in time to take Philip's identity, for though he had, as Philip's counterfeit, blustered gallantly to von Lutten of his rights as a soldier of France, he knew very well that the claim would serve him in little stead if the Elector were convinced of his

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intrigue with the Princess who was the Electoral Prince's wife. For that meant treason against the state of Schlafingen, that meant a crime which the autocrat of Schlafingen would think himself perfectly justified in punishing as he pleased. John knew very well what form the pleasure of the offended potentate would take. He knew, too, from the supper-table scandals of Allegresse that Monsieur de la Vigerie, representative of his most Catholic majesty, would be none too eager to serve the cause of a successful rival for the favors of the Electoral Princess. But though his head was as tickle on his shoulders as that of Claudio in the comedy, John did not care a rap for the peril he was in. He did not set his life at a high price. It was already forfeit in one country; it mattered little if he paid the penalty in another. Philip's life was worth the saving, for Philip had a clean career, and Philip had a cause to serve, and, above all, Philip was little Philip. So John sat with his arms folded and listened with an air of good-humored simplicity to von Lutten's somewhat obvious strategies, and was perfectly composed and debonair when the carriage came to a halt at a door in the left wing of the palace, and von Lutten, disappointed at the little effect of his arguments, and therefore less polite in voice and manner, summoned him to alight.

John followed his conductor past a sentinel into a hall, and along passages and up-stairs, and through corridors till they came to a halt in a handsome ante-chamber outside whose doors a couple of soldiers

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kept guard. Von Lutten pointed out to John that provision of wine and cakes stood on a side-table if he desired refreshment. He also pointed out the futility of any attempt to escape, a courtesy which John acknowledged with the assurance that as he was certain that he had no danger to escape from, he was perfectly content to remain where he was, especially with the solace of the wine and the cakes. Von Lutten made a grimace, took snuff, shrugged his shoulders, told his prisoner that he would be summoned when he was needed, and so left him to his reflections.

Those reflections were very much pleasanter than von Lutten dreamed of. John always enjoyed a whimsical adventure, and here was an adventure that was whimsical with a vengeance. He chuckled to think how diverting an alibi he had provided for Philip, and the buoyancy of his blithe spirits assured him that the tangled business would smooth out according to his wishes. "The luck of the O'Hagans," he murmured, confidently, to himself.

XVIII

A PALACE OF PERTURBATION

THE little world of the palace was profoundly agitated. Through all its labyrinth rumor ran, carried by pages, bandied by waiting-maids, brawled over in the guard-house, cackled over by court ladies and their beaux, tittered at by cynic wits. All that was definitely known was that at an early hour Prince Max, having slept off the fumes of the preceding night's debauch, had demanded an audience of the Elector his father. Prince Max had been denied on the ground that the Elector was asleep, and that as he had given orders that he was not to be disturbed under any conceivable condition of things, there was nobody in his suite foolhardy enough to infringe upon his commands. Prince Max, it seemed, went away in a vile humor, to return again later, and once again later still, when at last the news greeted his surliness that the Elector was awake, and had consented very unwillingly to receive him while the vexed Elector drank his morning chocolate.

The interview between father and son was long, and at first stormy, as it seemed to those who waited outside the Electoral bedchamber and heard the

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hubbub of voices. But presently this calmed down, and by-and-by Prince Max came forth from the presence with a look of satisfaction on his sullen face, and a minute or two later von Lutten was sent for and despatched to the town with a carriage and a military escort.

It was freely asserted and generally credited that he had gone to pay a visit to the handsome stranger, the young Irish gentleman in the service of France, who had been accorded such a distinguished position in the court minuet on the previous evening by the favor of her highness the Electoral Princess. Soon after this belief was confirmed by the return of von Lutten with the Chevalier O'Hagan in his company, it was known, at first to a few, and then, as court knowledge ever widens to many, that the Elector had sent a peremptory message to his daughter-in-law, at her pavilion in the park, demanding her immediate attendance upon him at the palace. The palace air buzzed with whispers, quivered with questions. Speculations gleamed in all eyes and trembled on all lips.

Dorothea and Swanhild, escorted by the silent Banbury, had reached the park through byways without adventure or discovery. At the little private gate of which Swanhild had the key they said a grateful farewell to their escort, and Swanhild favored him with a glance which set his honest heart dancing. Then they slipped into the park and out of his sight, and he made his way to his lodgings in a state of singular perturbation. Really, for a newly arrived

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minister he was getting very much into the thick of things. He felt helplessly that he was becoming implicated in mysteries with which he, as a discreet diplomatist, had no concern whatever; but then he thought of Swanhild's bright eyes, and of Swanhild's red lips, which he longed most unaffectedly to kiss, and he forgot everything else in a golden dream in which a girl like Diana and Beddington in Surrey were deliciously associated.

As for Diana and her Princess, they had made their way through quiet alleys to the pavilion and gained their apartments, and just changed their flower-girl seeming for the habits of court ladies when the Elector's message arrived. Dorothea had been anticipating danger ever since her escape from the "Three Kings," and she met the summons with no sign of alarm. Smiling she turned to Swanhild.

"Will-o'-the-Wisp, my father-in-law wants to see me. Shall we walk across the park to the palace?"

Swanhild nodded assent. She did not speak, for her thoughts were too busy to allow her to talk. She scented peril in this message, and her quick wits climbed the heights of innumerable possibilities. While Dorothea was informing the Elector's envoy that she would at once attend upon his serene highness, Swanhild slipped into the next room and rapidly wrote a little note which ran thus:

"Come at once to the palace and demand an audience of the Elector. If I am there I will find a reason for

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your presence. If I am not you can easily invent a pretext, and your obedience will be a proof of your devotion to
DIANA."

She hurriedly addressed this note to the high and well-born the Herr Banbury at his lodgings, and, calling a page, told him to deliver the letter on the instant. Then she rejoined her mistress, whom she found ready to set out.

The two women walked across the park together, each conscious of danger, neither speaking of it. Both felt that they were on the edge of a peril that had better be faced without waste of words. The tokens of last night's revels had all disappeared; the slowly deepening day filled the green spaces with a rich beauty till they seemed like the lawns of dream-land; beneath the trees the leaves dappled the grass with dancing shadows, the canal gleamed like a giant's sword, the lips of the fountain made a plaintive music through the stillness; in the distant glades the shy deer drifted.

"Here," Dorothea thought, wistfully, "was a little paradise for a happy woman." She thought of Prince Max, stupid, brutal, into whose arms she had been flung against her will, because it had pleased him in his fleshliness to covet her young beauty, and because to wed his daughter to an Electoral Prince seemed a great thing in the eyes of the foolish Duke of Sonnenburg. Her fancy floated away from this park to that garden where she had been so happy, the garden she had thought of, talked of last night in the moonlight,

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talked of with Philip. She had almost grieved to see him again, in that night of many colors, but now she was glad, for the sight of him and the memories he kindled had given her courage and determination to break away from her hideous captivity and deliver her wronged womanhood unto peace. Philip would help her; then Philip would bid her good-bye, and she would be patient, cleansed from shame and freed from fear. So she mused as she swiftly trod the herbage of the park.

When Dorothea reached the palace with Swanhild she was quick to notice the elements of unrest, malicious or merely curious, that stirred its wonted formality. But she had no eyes for furtive glances, no ears for furtive whispers. Moving serenely indifferent by mocking or pitying faces as if they had no more reality than visions seen on the fringe of sleep, she went at once to the Elector's apartment and swept into his presence followed by Swanhild. She saw that the old Prince was angry, but she knew from experience that it was ever best for a woman to face his wrath with audacity.

"Your serene highness sent for me," she said, boldly. "You only anticipated my wishes, for I had resolved to ask audience of you to-day to demand better treatment."

"We are treated as we deserve in this world," observed the Elector, who had a taste for sententious platitudes. "Before we consider your grievances I have a piece of news for you and a question to ask you."

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All this had been arranged beforehand with son Max at the tail of the morning's stormy interview. Son Max had quite won over the Elector, and had conceived that this was the best way of startling Dorothea into self-betrayal. But Dorothea was not to be so startled.

"Well, sir," she said, looking the Elector full in the face with a steadfast gravity that did something to disconcert him, for he entertained not merely a kind of affection, but also a kind of respect for his daughter-in-law.

"My piece of news," said the Elector, with a judicial manner which he believed to be very much the manner of Solomon, "is that the Chevalier Philip O'Hagan has just been arrested by my order at his lodgings in the town."

Dorothea took the news, which she had expected to hear, with an admirable show of indifference.

"Indeed, your highness! And what has the Chevalier done to offend against the state of Schlafingen?"

"That," said the Elector, sourly, "is more, I fear, a question for you to answer when you have answered the question I spoke of. What man was at your window after midnight last night?"

Dorothea felt as if the door of a trap had suddenly closed upon her. Not for her life's sake would she deny what had really happened, and yet she knew that nothing short of direct denial would be of the least avail. They could not, it was true, compel her

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to surrender the name of the man with whom she spoke, but the arrest of Philip O'Hagan showed that the Elector had at least strong suspicions, and possibly positive proof, though she could not think how this might be. She was about to challenge the Elector's right to question her when she was strangely interrupted.

Swanhild, who up to this time had been standing discreetly in the background, now came vehemently forward and flung herself at the feet of the astonished Elector.

"Have mercy, your highness," she pleaded, in a trembling voice, "and do not attribute to a justly condemnable guilt what was only at the worst a highly-condonable folly."

This amazing intervention moved the Elector to a passionate explosion of fury.

"Devil take you!" he yelled. "Cannot you let my daughter-in-law plead for herself. Mind your own business, baggage."

He intensified the offence of the opprobrious noun by flanking it and supporting it with several still more opprobrious adjectives, and he made an impatient movement with his foot as if he would spurn the kneeling woman, on whom, as she grovelled, Dorothea gazed with an amazement as unaffected as the Elector's rage.

"I do not plead for my august mistress," Swanhild moaned, through a series of sobs which she attenuated to the utmost to spin out the necessary time,

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while she peeped anxiously through the fingers that were pressed against her face at the distant door and wondered if it would ever open. "I plead only for myself. Deal gently with me, your serene highness; promise to deal gently with me, and I will confess my fault to your merciful, indulgent ears."

Swanhild was putting into execution a little plan which she had formed, but which she had been careful not to confide to Dorothea, as she knew very well that Dorothea would have peremptorily forbidden her to attempt it. So Dorothea stared at her Will-o'-the-Wisp, and wondered what had come to her, while the Elector was so bewildered by this unexpected turn of affairs that his dearest and most familiar oaths seemed to shrivel upon his lips. He was trying to collect his senses enough to command some unusually expressive expletive, when the door of the chamber opened and the official on guard, entering, announced that Mr. James Banbury, the English representative, solicited the honor of an immediate audience with his serene highness.

The Elector, perplexed and angry at this vexatious interruption to his delicate family investigation, was wavering between a refusal to see the Englishman and the dismissal of his daughter-in-law for the present, when Swanhild, lifting her tear-stained face, again addressed him:

"Admit him, your serene highness, admit him, for he can say, it may be, better than I can, what must be said, even though it be said to my reproof."

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The Elector glowered at her, and then turning to the attendant bade him admit the representative of England. A moment later Mr. Banbury entered the room, with his usual British dignity intensified by his inner marvellings as to the meaning of Swanhild's letter, and his private compunctions for the devious courses into which a romantic attachment seemed to be leading him. His British dignity, however, somewhat forsook him when he beheld to his astonishment the singular trio who confronted him. The Elector was purple with anger, the Electoral Princess was pale with anger, and Diana—his Diana—was kneeling on the floor in an attitude of entreaty, with her beautiful eyes welling tears. Only a desperate exercise of his insular calm, and the sense of the solemnity of his position, prevented him from flinging himself on his knees by her side and clasping her in his arms. But while the duty of the diplomatist wrestled with the desire of the man, Swanhild fixed him with her dripping eyes and spoke to him in a voice broken by sobs.

"Monsieur Banbury, Monsieur Banbury, you are a gallant gentleman, and I know you would be as silent as the grave unless I gave you leave to speak. But I do give you leave to speak. You may tell all."

"I may tell all," Banbury repeated, mechanically. He was completely flabbergasted, and for the moment even his gallantry was tempted to believe that his adored Swanhild—she was now his adored Swanhild—had gone mad. He said no more, for he did not

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know what to say, being woefully ignorant of the all he had been licensed to reveal, but if he had attempted to speak further Swanhild would have instantly cut him short.

"Yes," she repeated, fascinating him with her shining eyes—"yes, you may tell all. I shall be blamed by the good Elector, I shall be blamed by my august mistress, but at least you can explain to both these high personages here present that if I spoke with you at the pavilion window last night there was nothing in what we said that might not be changed between an honorable maid and an honorable gentleman."

"There certainly was not," Banbury affirmed, as emphatically as truthfully. For all his pomposity he was by no means a fool, and he caught the drift of Swanhild's desire. For some reason or other she wished it to be thought that he had talked with her on the previous night at a window of the pavilion. He would yield to her wish, he would agree with her, whatever the British government might think of his conduct. While Dorothea, understanding Swanhild's purpose, gave her a quick glance of gratitude, the Elector turned upon the stolid Banbury, glaring rage, glaring amazement.

"Do you mean to tell me," he bellowed, "that it was you my son saw last night, after midnight, conversing with a woman at the window of the pavilion?"

Swanhild's sniffs were piercing in their intensity. Banbury thought that the best thing he could do was to bow in respectful affirmation. Then he glanced at

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Swanhild with the tail of his eye, and seemed to catch a look from her that spurred him to further confirmation of her story.

"Without the lady's permission," he began, grandiloquently, "your serene highness may well conceive that I, like any other gentleman in like case, would be the last man in the world to drop a word, give a glance, or express a hint that might reveal an honor which was so graciously accorded to me. But since the lady herself expressly sanctions my confession—"

He glanced nervously at Swanhild, after this heroic effort at talking against time, and he was inclined to believe that through the lattice-work of her fingers something very similar to a wink obscured for an instant the lustre of one of those shining eyes.

"She does, she does," Swanhild wailed, melodiously, and Banbury, taking his cue with a sense of refreshment, pursued with alacrity the path of fabrication.

"Since the lady herself sanctions my confession, there is, of course, nothing for me to do but to, in a word, confess."

"Confess what?" roared the Elector, while Swanhild rocked to and fro upon the carpet in a seeming agony of grief.

"Do not spare me," she blubbered; "after all, it is no great harm to talk with a gentleman from a window that is quite out of his reach."

"So it was you, was it," growled the vexed Elector,

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"who have put us to all this pother? May I ask, sir, what you have to say for yourself?"

This was to Banbury, and the tone of the interrogation instantly recalled Banbury from a limbo of love and bewilderment to a sense of his English dignity.

"Your serene highness," he replied, stiffly, "I have no occasion to say anything for myself, and I have yet to learn that I am answerable to any person, save only to the lady herself, for any attentions I may be permitted to pay to a certain lady. If that lady had not chosen of her own accord to make public the extreme honor she did me in holding converse with me, my lips would have been sealed upon the matter. But I take it that our friendship is no concern of any third person."

He spoke very stubbornly, though in his heart he was well aware that he was very possibly perilling seriously his diplomatic position. Swanhild smiled a vehement approval of him behind the fan of her hands. Dorothea stood very still, with a grave face. She admired the ingenuity of Swanhild; she admired the fidelity of Banbury; she wondered how it would end. The Elector leaned forward in a fury.

"Do you mean to assert that it is no concern of any third person that my son Max believed that he beheld his wife speaking from her window with a stranger after midnight?"

"I should think, your serene highness," replied Banbury, with great dignity, "that it is indeed the

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concern of his highness's physicians, if he finds himself given to such unfortunate hallucinations."

He wished very much that he were on firmer ground; that he knew a little more of what had happened last night, and what he himself was supposed to have done, but he conceived that his wisest conduct was to face the Elector's anger with a haughty front. After all, he was in a sense the British Lion.

His resolute bearing seemed to have some effect upon the Elector, who in his heart would have been pleased enough that Dorothea should get out of the scrape. He turned now to his daughter-in-law.

"Did you know," he asked, in a more amiable tone than he had hitherto adopted, "that this woman of yours was chatting with Monsieur Banbury at your window last night."

"Your serene highness," replied Dorothea, with a gravity that she found it hard to maintain—for she had a lively sense of humor—now that the immediate danger seemed to be over, "I can assure you that this is the first I have heard of it."

"I did not say a word to her highness about it," sobbed Swanhild, now patently tearful again, "for I feared that her highness would not approve of my conduct, but Monsieur Banbury is such a fascinating person."

The seeming simplicity of this impertinent confession made Mr. Banbury turn very red in the face, and made the Elector laugh like a drunken grenadier. Dorothea, still holding a grave face at the astonishing

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comedy, wondered what would be done with regard to the arrest of Philip O'Hagan, but she knew that it would be impolitic for her to interfere. After all, the only possible course under the conditions would be release with apologies.

"Sir," said the Elector to Banbury, "I will not say that you have made a fool of yourself, for I suppose such plain speech would be considered undiplomatic, and, besides, your miss is pretty enough to justify a great deal of folly. But you certainly have made fools of other persons, chiefly my son Max and myself, for which I fancy one of us will find it rather hard to forgive you. But I bear you no grudge, young gentleman, and I may as well restore you this token of yours."

As he spoke he took from under some papers on the table beside him a piece of cherry-colored ribbon and gravely presented it to Banbury, who took it from his hands without the least appearance of surprise. But even as he took it the Elector seemed to renew his suspicions.

"I see," he said, pointing to Banbury's sword, "that you have already supplied your loss and that you have changed your taste in colors."

Banbury guessed that the ribbon had once been a sword-knot, and that he was supposed to have lost it during his imaginary interview with Swanhild on the previous evening. It was certainly of a very different color from the bow that adorned at that moment the hilt of his neat side-arm. But Banbury

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was making rapid strides in the conduct of a courtier according to Swanhild, and his invention proved equal to the occasion.

"I vary the hue of my sword-knots daily," he declared with a ready effrontery that amazed him and delighted Swanhild. "That was yesterday's color; this azure is to-day's. To-morrow, if your serene highness deigns to notice such trifles, you will see that I shall be wearing green."

The Elector stroked his chin, the Elector shrugged his shoulders. For him the incident was now at an end. He was sufficiently pleased that Dorothea was cleared. He was not deeply grieved because Max had plainly made a gaby of himself. Really, he did not love Max, although he was the Electoral Prince.

"I will trespass upon your time no further," he said to Banbury. "As to you, minx," he went on, addressing Swanhild, "if I were in your mistress's place I would give you a good whipping for getting her into trouble. Dollkin," he continued, addressing Dorothea in a tone of good-humored expostulation, "why do you not make it up with Max, and leave that damned pavilion of yours to your women and their woers."

Dorothea held her fair head high, and there were no signs of concession on her face.

"When Prince Max remembers his duties, and respects the decencies of life, it will be time to consider my own conduct. I wish your serene highness good-day."

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She made the Elector a profound courtesy; Swan-hild did the like, and the two women passed out of the Elector's presence. They were followed in a few minutes by Mr. Banbury, who took his permitted leave of his serene highness with as much promptitude as was consistent with the observance of courtly etiquette.

XIX

PETTICOAT INFLUENCE

IN the mean time, John, waiting in his guarded antechamber, found his time hanging heavy on his hands. He tasted the wine and found it to be excellent. He nibbled at a cake and pronounced it satisfactory for such a sweetmeat. Between nibbling and sipping he soon managed—having at all times a ready appetite—to empty platter and flagon. His reflections, begun philosophically, mellowed with the extension of the little feast, and by the time that he had come to the last drop and the last crumb, John was in a humor to face any fortune.

His position, he pointed out to himself as he paced the chamber, was not really very perilous. He could deny having been under the window of the princess on the previous evening with all the more confidence because his denial happened to be absolutely true, though John would never have allowed himself to be troubled by a mendacity that was exacted from him in the service of a pretty woman. Again he reviewed his memories of the past night and again he found them decidedly agreeable. First there was the fairly long and quite intimate drive to Allegresse, in the course

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of which John learned to his satisfaction that his fair companion evidently had a very marked tenderness for brother Philip. Then came Allegresse itself, the bright, beautiful villa a little way beyond the town with its jovial company of bold women and bold men, its excellent supper, its fine wines, its high play after supper—at which said play John, who was lucky at cards, pocketed quite a lot of money—and, when play was over, there was that genial and discreet pairing off of complacent couples which was also very much to John's taste.

In fact, to one who took all pleasures that came his way very generously, with a true adventurer's greeting to good fortune, the events of that merry evening were as satisfactory as one that wore another's name could desire. A little dexterous reticence on his part when the lady of Allegresse referred to past events of which John knew nothing, but of which Philip must have known much, enabled him to steer successfully through the shoals and quicksands of a very heady flirtation. The lady, indeed, was, as she believed, renewing an acquaintanceship that she had evidently formerly valued, but to John the affair had all the fascination of novelty, and he responded to his companion's advances with an alacrity which was evidently greater than she had expected, and which, in consequence, afforded her an unconcealed delight.

The question now remained to be answered—would the lady of Allegresse allow her guest to state where he had passed the previous evening? If he could con-

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trive to ask her permission, and if she refused, of course, there was nothing for it but that John must hold his tongue. He had accepted her hospitality, her favors, and he owed her obedience in such a particular. That he had allowed her to regard him as Philip, whereas he was really John, did not weigh in the least upon his conscience. He was a sufficiently shrewd judge of women to gauge the nature of the lady of Allegresse with accuracy, and to be very sure that it was not the name Philip or the name John that the so seemingly genial, so seemingly sentimental lady took a fancy to, but the comely person that stalked its chivalrous way about the world ticketed with whatever Christian name might serve.

While John was speculating, however, Madame von Lutten was executing. Coming languidly in from Allegresse to attend to her nominal duties at the palace, the first news that greeted her was of the arrest of the Chevalier O'Hagan. For a moment it crossed her astonished fancy that his serene highness the Elector took it into his head, thus late in the day, to make manifestation of a jealousy that he had never displayed when she was in the pinkness of her spring. But when she heard the rumors of the reason for the arrest of the Irish gentleman her vague alarm turned into very positive anger. For she was very pleased with her Philip, delighted to find him so compliant—he who had been in the old Parisian days, if not disdainful, curiously indifferent to her wiles.

Her first impulse was to demand an immediate in-

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interview with the Elector, but on learning that his serene highness was at that moment closeted with his daughter-in-law, she did not presume so far to impinge upon court etiquette as to interrupt a princely family colloquy. So she insisted on being told where the Chevalier O'Hagan was sequestered, and on learning his whereabouts she lost no time in hastening thither.

The soldiers on guard outside John's antechamber made no attempt to stay the entry of the imperious lady. Her ostensible position as the Electress's Mistress of the Robes, her unofficial but undeniable influence over the Elector, her intimacy with the Electoral Prince, made her a power in the palace whom it was worth no one's while to cross. So in a moment John's solitude was relieved by the entry of a very indignant, very affectionate lady, who declared that she would move mountains to set him free.

"Madame," said John, calmly, "have you any objection to my stating where I spent some delightful hours last night?"

Madame von Lutten laughed heartily.

"Why should I object, my dear Chevalier? I do as I please in Schlafingen, and Allegresse is my kingdom, where I reign with unquestioned authority. His serene highness himself considers it to be a privilege to be invited within its walls."

"Nobody could prize that privilege more than I do," John assured her, gallantly; "but I was not sure exactly how your excellent husband—"

Madame von Lutten crowed contemptuously.

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"Do you really suppose, my ingenuous friend, that I recognize any responsibility to him? I have invented him, and he is duly grateful to me for my forethought, but he has quite enough to do to manage the Elector's household without trying to manage mine as well. He is never invited to Allegresse, I assure you."

"That is a very comfortable family arrangement," John commented, thoughtfully. The lady laughed again.

"You silly fellow, since when have you been so squeamish? I do not remember that you used to express a special interest in Graf von Lutten's feelings when we were in Paris."

John wished very cordially that his interview with Philip had lasted long enough to allow of his learning some particulars of Philip's adventures in the land of tenderness. However, it was fairly plain that he need not be too discreet in his reception of any little attentions his still handsome patroness might be pleased to accord him. As he did not, however, quite know what to say at the moment, he compensated for his silence by smiling brightly and kissing her hand.

"I have told a page," said Madame von Lutten, "to let me know the moment his serene highness is rid of his bran-doll of a daughter-in-law. And in the mean time, dear Philip, what are your plans?"

Her hearer was so busy asking himself how long it would take him to get used to being addressed as Philip when his name happened to be John, that he could think of no more immediate answer to the lady's

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question than to kiss her hand again, an answer which seemed to serve the turn exceedingly well.

"Would you be unwilling," she asked, with a somewhat languishing smile, "to spend a little while here in this dull court of Schlafingen?"

John was very willing indeed, and he said so very sincerely, though his reasons were not precisely those which would have gained him much credit with Madame von Lutten.

"Of course it must be made worth your while," she insisted. "A soldier of fortune cannot afford to give his company for nothing, even to his serene highness the Elector of Schlafingen."

John nodded. The lady was evidently so resolute to play his game for him that he felt he could do no better for the present than to leave the cards in her experienced fingers.

"I will find you something," Madame von Lutten was beginning, when her remarks were interrupted by the arrival of a page who informed her that her highness the Electoral Princess had just quitted the presence of his serene highness the Elector. Madame von Lutten immediately made to go.

"I must leave you for a while, my friend. Do not fret about your present captivity. In a little while I think I shall have found a way to gild your cage very handsomely."

The page had vanished. John expressed his acknowledgments more emphatically than by kissing the lady's hand. Then Madame von Lutten, redder

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beneath her rouge, disappeared, and John was again left alone to his reflections, which, in truth, were not altogether of the pleasantest. Here was a woman who had undoubtedly taken a fancy to him, but who as undoubtedly took him for another man. It was not altogether an agreeable position, John was compelled reluctantly to admit. As a set-off, however, it was but fair to remember that Madame von Lutten reproached the O'Hagan of the past—that mysterious Parisian past—for a very flagrant indifference, and that she commended the O'Hagan of the present for having done much to redeem his earlier errors. Honest John was not very particular in his love-affairs. It was ever light come and light go with him, and his enterprise for the little, pathetic Oglethorpe girl was his one piece of sentimental quixotism. If he was now risking his life at Schlafingen, it was not at all for the sake of the Electoral Princess whom he had once seen, but solely for the sake of Philip. As for Madame von Lutten, he took her measure well enough. He knew her for what she was, amorous, dangerous, selfish, one to whom love had much the same meaning that it had to a barrack-room captain; one that would be liberal of her waning charms to all comers, and favor two generations of princes. Yet for all that, John wished he were easier in his mind about the adventure, wished that the conditions of the desperate game he was playing were such that the over-affectionate lady might know that his name was John when she tenderly addressed him as Philip.

XX

TIT FOR TAT

WHEN Madame von Lutten bounced into the presence of the Elector she found her august sovereign in something of a temper. But the fair lady was used to his ways and she knew how to sway his rage with well-tried cajoleries and the revival of ancient artifices. To open the campaign, however, she pretended to be very angry.

“What is this I hear, your serene highness, about the arrest of the Chevalier O’Hagan?”

“What do you hear?” growled the Elector. “And what business is it of yours?” he added, as an after-thought.

“It is very much my business,” she snapped back, “when a gentleman and a soldier, who is a personal friend of mine, is arrested as if he were a deserter, on some trumpety charge of being in a place where he could not possibly have been.”

The Elector pricked up his ears.

“Do you know where the Chevalier O’Hagan was last night?” he asked.

“The Chevalier did me the honor to sup with me last night at my house of Allegresse, where we divert-

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ed ourselves with company, wine, and cards till dawn. I can assure you that the Chevalier was far too well employed to wish to waste his time beneath another lady's windows."

The Elector wagged his head thoughtfully. Evidently son Max had made an ugly blunder. First the supposed treasonable intrigue resolved itself into an amourette between an eccentric Englishman and a lady-in-waiting. Now the assertion of Madame von Lutten made it plain that at the time when son Max was bellowing beneath Dorothea's balcony, the man he suspected was enjoying himself at Allegresse, some three miles away. The Elector remembered with a pleasant sigh that one could enjoy one's self very much at Allegresse. On the whole he was not over-sorry that son Max had, once again, made a very palpable ass of himself.

"I begin to be afraid," he confessed to the Countess, "that we have made a mistake with regard to the Chevalier O'Hagan."

"A mistake!" the lady echoed, mockingly. "I think your serene highness must recognize that to arrest a French officer on a charge which has not the slightest foundation is a very serious mistake indeed."

The Elector nodded.

"Well, well, I suppose it rests with us to make him some amends. Tell me, you who are a friend of his, what shall we do to placate him. Would a pocketful of thalers salve his wounded feelings?"

Madame von Lutten made a grimace.

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"Monsieur the Chevalier is not to be bought off like a corporal. He is a gentleman of rank and reputation whose presence is an adornment to any court in Europe."

"What would you have me do?" the Elector asked. He felt sure that Madame von Lutten had made up her mind as to what she wanted, and that the sooner he learned her pleasure the better it would be. Indeed, the Elector was very fond of Madame von Lutten.

"Were I your highness I should certainly seize the opportunity to welcome such a distinguished soldier into my service."

"Into my service," repeated the Elector. "Why, what have I to offer the gentleman?"

"Your serene highness," the lady reminded him, "the post of Captain of the Palace Guard is vacant at this moment."

"I think," said the Elector, looking perplexed, "that I promised the appointment to some client of Max's—some Swedish fellow, one Brandt, of my son's body-guard."

"You can give something else to his highness's man. It is only fair that Prince Max, who has caused all this bother, should sacrifice something to set things right again. Remember that the Chevalier O'Hagan is a subject of the King of France, whom it is politic to please and impolitic to offend."

"How you women babble of policy and impolicy," grumbled the Elector. But he was yielding, and she knew it, and the temptress sidled close to him.

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"There is somebody even more important than the King of France to consider," she whispered.

"Who may that be?" questioned the Elector. He knew very well, but he liked to be wooed and wheedled and made a gallant of. Madame von Lutten set her smooth, painted cheek against his rough, red face.

"None other," she whispered, "than the fond rogue whom you were once pleased to fancy."

The Elector swore roundly that he fancied her still, that he fancied her always, and so, after a little dandling and dallying, the business was settled. Settled, too, in a very business-like way, for the wily von Lutten did not budge from the room till she got first the order for the Chevalier O'Hagan's immediate release, and, next, the appointment of the Chevalier O'Hagan to command of the Palace Guard—both set out on large sheets of paper in the Elector's sprawling hand of write. With these in her possession she whisked out of the room and sped along the corridors till she came to a halt panting before the room in which John still lay immured and musing upon destiny. The Countess flourished her order of release in the faces of the soldiers on guard, and then sweeping into the room she flung herself upon the neck of its inmate.

"You are free, Philip, you are free!" she cried, as she hugged him; and then releasing him from her embrace she showed him the Elector's order for his release, which John surveyed with satisfaction.

"But you are more than free," she went on, "you

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are now a great man in the palace," and once again she clipped him and kissed him before she produced her second paper and dangled it at him.

"What do you think this is, sir?" she asked him, very playful and coy; and when he suggested that perhaps the Elector had nominated him as his successor she laughed heartily at his humor, and then showed him into what great estate he had come of a sudden.

"It is a high appointment," she insisted, "and a profitable one, for the care of the palace is in your hands."

John had taken the paper from her and was reading it over carefully. There was no doubt about it, the paper distinctly appointed him Captain of the Palace Guard. Luck could hardly have done him a better turn.

"What kind of authority does this confer upon me?" he asked.

She answered.

"My dear friend, it makes you the most important person in the household. As the safety of the palace is in your hands there is practically no limit to your discretion to ensure that safety."

"I suppose I ought to go and kiss the Elector's hands," John observed. The lady laughed.

"You had much better kiss mine, instead, if you want to show your gratitude sensibly."

John took her at her word, and more than took her at her word. When she had breath she said, de-

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murely, "You must learn to find your way to my apartments, for I take a great deal of interest in the Palace Guard, and I often give the password for the night."

"I shall be delighted to wait upon you directly," John answered, "but my strict sense of duty prompts me first of all to go to the guard-house and take over my command."

"You zealous gentleman," smiled Madame von Lutten, "do not be too long about it or you will make me a jealous lady."

They walked out of the room together and parted at its threshold, she to go to her apartments, John to seek the guard-house. He knew well enough where it was, for he had noted its whereabouts as he entered the palace that little while back which now seemed such a long time ago. So short a space it needs to make a favorite at court.

On his way he met von Lutten himself, and he knew by von Lutten's face that he had just left the Elector and that he had just heard the news. But before he could speak, John forestalled him, flourishing his brevet and proclaiming his new dignity. Von Lutten smiled a wry smile.

"I was coming to seek you," he said, "and to express my regret at our little misadventure of the morning. I had to obey orders, my dear Captain, but I am very glad that you were able to establish so agreeable an alibi."

"Much obliged for your good wishes," said John.

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“Perhaps, as you are so affable, you will be good enough to accompany me to the guard-house and lend the dignity of your official patronage to my appointment.”

It was ever von Lutten’s policy to be on good terms with any holder of any portion of power who might by chance prove of service to him. So he agreed, with a great show of amiability, to accompany John on his errand of importance, and on the way to the guard-house busied himself with telling John this and that fragment of gossip about the men under his command which might serve to make his sudden assumption of authority easier. By the time that the pair had reached the soldiers’ quarters John knew all that he wanted and all that he needed to know about the officers and the men whom a whimsical chance had placed under his command.

He learned, for instance, that there were two bodies of men connected with the palace, of whom the set composed of the tall grenadiers that the Elector loved was the more important. He learned that this was the set of which he was now commander. But there was also Prince Max’s small private body-guard, a very inferior fellowship, now under the command of a Swedish adventurer named Gustav Brandt. When the command of the Palace Guard had fallen vacant owing to its late captain’s decision to accept a post in the service of Austria, Prince Max had been wishful, and, indeed, confident, that the command would be bestowed upon his Swedish client,

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Brandt, who could drink so well and smoke so well and tell such skittish stories. Von Lutten, indeed, admitted that he had taken Brandt's appointment for granted, but he added with a sour smile that he was sure the Elector's present choice was in every way satisfactory. To which John responded with a hearty grin.

In the guard-house they found a couple of officers whiling away the time over a pack of cards and a bottle of wine. It was their hour to be on duty—a duty that wearied them greatly—and they did their best to kill the time with wine and trifling. In a room beyond waited the number of soldiers necessary to make up the official guard.

As von Lutten and John entered the room the soldiers looked up from their sport, and, recognizing the minister, rose and saluted. Von Lutten lost no time in presenting the new Captain of the Palace Guard, and John lost no time in greeting very amiably his new brothers-in-arms. The introduction completed, von Lutten made to depart. John checked him.

"One moment, my dear minister," he pleaded. "Have I quite mastered the grandeur of my rank? As far as the palace is concerned my authority is fairly unlimited?"

"I should say quite unlimited, my dear Captain," von Lutten corrected.

"So that it is within my power and within the scope of my command to arrest any one I please?"

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"Any one you please," von Lutten answered; and then added, with a little cackling laugh, "always, of course, excepting his serene highness the Elector and his highness the Electoral Prince."

"I take note of the reservation," said John, solemnly; "otherwise I have a free hand?"

He asked all his questions with a childlike simplicity which diverted von Lutten.

"Absolutely a free hand," he emphasized, and again made for the door, and again John delayed him.

"Wait a bit," he suggested. "I am going to close that free hand of mine for a moment."

Then turning to the senior of the two officers who had stood respectfully listening to this colloquy, he commanded, sharply:

"Captain, place Graf von Lutten under arrest."

The officers stared at John; von Lutten stared at John. Then von Lutten began to titter.

"You are a wag," he protested.

But John's face showed no sign of waggishness.

"Arrest Graf von Lutten," he repeated.

There was a moment's silence, and then the elder of the two officers suggested, somewhat nervously, that his excellency was joking.

"Of course," von Lutten corroborated, "his excellency is joking."

John paid no manner of heed to the minister, but addressed himself with a sudden sternness to the officer who had ventured to question his command.

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"Was your former captain in the habit of joking with his subalterns when he professed to give orders?" he asked, sharply. "If so, I congratulate the company on a change in its command. Now, sir, arrest Graf von Lutten, or I will place you under arrest for mutiny."

The officer thus addressed turned with a pale face to von Lutten.

"Herr Graf," he said, "you are my prisoner."

"I?" protested von Lutten, angrily; "nothing of the sort. You have no power to arrest me."

"I beg your pardon," said John, stiffly, "my power in the confines of the palace is unlimited, and I am answerable for my conduct only to the Elector. Do your duty, sir."

At a summons from the officer some soldiers came from the adjoining room.

"Convey Graf von Lutten to the Round House," the officer commanded the corporal. Von Lutten turned a livid face upon John.

"You will remember this, I promise you," he said.

John laughed in his face.

"I am not likely to forget it, I promise you," he retorted. "Your excellency has no idea how droll a figure you cut. I am sorry that I cannot longer enjoy your company, but I have an engagement elsewhere in the palace which calls me peremptorily. Remove your prisoner."

The soldiers, stirred somewhat from their military phlegm by the whimsicality of the proceedings, re-

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moved their prisoner, indignant, but too astute to allow his indignation to lead him into a personal conflict with soldiers who would undoubtedly obey their instructions with force if necessary. So he shrugged his shoulders and made an ugly grimace.

"You are a fine cock of the walk," he snarled, "and you seem to think that you carry your peacock's feathers in your tail, you crow so loudly now. But there will be another song to sing when his serene highness hears of this foolery."

"That is as it may be and as it shall please Heaven and his serene highness."

John answered him very fiercely, and then the Count was marched off between a file of men to the Round House, looking very rueful. John turned to the two officers, who were staring at him in honest astonishment.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it is well that we should understand each other from the beginning. It has pleased his serene highness the Elector"—he saluted very gravely, as if the Elector were in presence, and the two officers followed his example mechanically—"to make me the Captain of this very distinguished company. So long as I hold that rank this very distinguished company will be pleased to remember that their Captain always means what he says. And now, gentlemen, I think nothing could be better than that we should crack a flask or two of the best together."

So said, so done. The wine was sent for, at John's expense, and for the next half-hour three merry

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gentlemen held very pleasant discourse together, talking of court matters with a light heart and a loose lip. When the wine was ended, and both his companions inclined to the maudlin, John, who was as steady as a balanced egg, rose and wished them a very good-afternoon.

"You will detain your prisoner," he said, "until I send the order for his release. Supply him with anything he may demand in the way of drink and victuals, but deny him pen and ink and paper, or the sending of any verbal message to any one. I am now going to keep a very pleasant appointment."

He saluted; the officers saluted. Then John left them, and, retracing his steps through the passages of the palace, came in due time to the door of the apartments of Madame von Lutten, where he found that he was over-expected and more than welcome.

XXI

RIDING FOR RESCUE

WHEN Philip found himself alone in his bedroom he lost no time in obeying John's instructions. A few seconds before the mirror enabled him to assume the red wig with its fringe of whiskers with sufficient neatness to transmute him into a very passable presentation of the second traveller at the "Three Kings." Then he hastily gathered together and thrust into his breast-pocket his few papers of importance. Cautiously opening the other door of the bedroom Philip ascertained that the corridor was deserted, and then following John's directions he went quickly and quietly in the direction of the red room, which he had no difficulty in finding. Here he busied himself in packing John's few travelling belongings into his valise, and here he waited until a distant rumbling of wheels and tramp of men gave him notice that the unwelcome von Lutten had taken his departure. Then, with John's travelling cloak over his habit and its collar about his ears, he descended, carrying his travelling sack, to the court-yard of the inn. Here he learned that what he suspected had happened, for he found the good people in a considerable commo-

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tion over the coming of von Lutten and his departure with the Chevalier O'Hagan as a travelling companion. Detaching Mistress Humperdienter from a group of garrulous neighbors, he settled his score for the red room, replied politely to her somewhat incoherent hopes that he had enjoyed his entertainment of the previous evening, and made his way towards the stables unaccompanied, as the inn hands were all in the street discussing with excited neighbors the meaning of the morning's visitation.

At the stable door he found Teague with a look of much concern on his face, for indeed the poor lad did not know what to do in these untoward circumstances. But a word in passing brought him to Philip's side in the quiet darkness of the stables.

"Do not look surprised, do not make a noise," a familiar voice commanded him out of the depths of the red beard. "Nod if you know my voice."

Teague nodded. His eyes were starting from his head with astonishment. Philip went on.

"You thought you saw me taken away from here just now, but you were wrong. They have got the wrong sow by the ear."

"Mother of mercy!" cried Teague, unable to restrain himself; "was that Master John?"

He had never seen Master John, as he called him, but he had heard of him, and it was easier to guess at the improbable than to accept the impossible.

"Hush!" Philip warned him. "As soon as I have

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gone, mount and follow me. I will wait for you half a mile beyond the town."

He led out his own instead of John's horse as he spoke, leaving Teague in the stable. Outside in the court-yard he found a hostler full of apologies for allowing him to find his beast himself. Philip assured him very truthfully that he did not mind in the least, gave him a couple of coins, mounted, and rode slowly across the court-yard, saluting Mistress Humperdienter as he passed her, and so moved through the little knot of people about the portal and out into the main street. Here he turned his horse's head to the left and made at a very deliberate trot for the outskirts of the town. In a few minutes he had ridden through the gate and over the bridge, and was on the wide highway stretching out towards the open country.

Obedient to his promise, Philip rode at a slow pace for about half a mile along the road, and then drew rein in the shade of a spreading tree to wait for Teague. He had not long to wait. In a comparatively few minutes the lad made his appearance upon the high-road, cantering briskly, and soon joined his master. Philip told him briefly as much as it was necessary for him to know of what had happened. Then handing over John's valise to the valet's care he resumed his journey, followed at a distance of a few yards by Teague, who, brimmed to bursting with curiosity and excitement, could not keep his eyes from his master and the fringe of ruddy hair that so

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transmogrified his familiar face, and had no more interest in the country through which they rode than his master had, though Philip's heedlessness was due to very different reasons.

Indeed, the country through which they were journeying was well worthy the attention of master and man, if the pair had not been so engrossed with other matters. In those days of dawning summer that German country showed at its best, the landscape pleasantly composed of fields and vineyards, gardens and orchards, covering the undulating plain through which their road ran, a plain that was held in a cup by a circle of swelling hills. Beyond those hills to the south lay Sonnenburg.

It was because he was thinking of Schlafingen that lay behind him and Sonnenburg that lay before him, of all that had happened in the place they left behind, and all that might happen in the place to which he was going, that Philip had no leisure to pay heed to the beauties of a scene that under other conditions would have appealed very directly to him, to that softer element in his nature which responded eagerly to bright colors and beautiful forms, and the tender tunes and melancholy words of plaintive ballads. All the sunny German world about him had a song of its own in the joy of the morning, a song that was soft and sweet like a love-song and merry like a drinking-song. To a free mind and a careless spirit such a land were the best for travel. But as Philip had neither a free mind nor a careless spirit, he had

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scarcely a thought for the glory of the morning nor a glance for the graces of the champaign.

“How shall I be received in Sonnenburg?” he kept asking himself. “And how shall I appeal to the Duke?” He remembered the Duke very well, a jolly, careless gentleman with a haphazard intelligence; something of a drinker, something of a rake, with the great passions of the antiquary. He had certainly loved his pretty daughter in the long ago days, yet his love must have been of queer metal if it could have been shaped to consent that she should wed with the Electoral Prince of Schlafingen. Still, even so easy-going a potentate must needs be moved when he heard the results of that marriage business; must needs be ready to welcome open-armed the child that had been made a woman against her will when she was sold into that black slavery on the other side of the river.

The afternoon sun was very warm. There was little shelter where they rode, and its beams struck very directly upon the travellers. They were now a good way from the town of Schlafingen; they would soon be over the frontier; the concealment that converted brother Philip into brother John seemed no longer necessary, and the muffle of the russet beard irked him sorely. So he pulled it from his cheeks and flung it to Teague to stuff into the saddle-bag, and thereafter both rode more at ease—Teague to see his master as he knew him, undisguised by a fringe of Muscovitish whisker, and Philip to feel the free air

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about his face and neck. Philip's spirits seemed to better with the shedding of his disguise; he urged his horse to a canter, the burden of a love-song rose unbidden to his lips. He would persuade the Elector of Sonnenburg to afford his daughter refuge; he would whisk Dorothea in secret from Schlafingen, and then, and then—well, then that should happen which should happen, but at least he would have played his part and kept his promise.

So he clattered forward full of cheer until, as he rounded a turn of the road, he saw that which knocked all the cheer out of him. For as he rounded the turn he came face to face with a gentleman riding a-horse-back towards him, and he saw on the instant that the gentleman was the Marquis de la Vigerie.

There was neither time nor opportunity to resume the abandoned disguise; there was no time to turn horse and ride elsewhere; there was no avail to try to push forward with averted head and so to pass unseen. Monsieur de la Vigerie had recognized Philip as promptly as Philip had recognized him, and Monsieur de la Vigerie instantly saluted him, calling him by his name.

The meeting was natural enough to any one who happened to be acquainted with the Marquis's ways. For Monsieur de la Vigerie found Schlafingen on the whole a very tedious place; so to relieve his ennui he had hired him a very pleasant country place about a league or so from the town, which he had been at pains to people with bright presences. His successes at the

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court were not enough to content him; he had much of the Grand Turk in him, and liked at times to escape from the finesse and etiquette of intrigue into a franker, a more vassal paradise. He had driven to his retreat after the masquerade, through the dawn; he had diverted himself with his playthings, and now he was riding carelessly back to Schlafingen, impelled by a languid sense of duty towards his master's interests and a keen desire to be near the beautiful Princess.

When he encountered Philip his careless face suddenly took on alertness. His quick gaze noted with pleasure that Philip was evidently on his travels.

"Good-day, Chevalier," he cried, greeting Philip cheerfully, and reining in his horse so that Philip was obliged perforce to do the like. "Why are you riding this way from Schlafingen? I thought that you were to pay me a visit."

It was not difficult to guess from the smile on his face and the sound of his voice that Monsieur de la Vigerie was far from displeased to find Philip riding away from Schlafingen, and that he forewent the pleasure of the promised visit with the greatest equanimity. But while he smiled at Philip, Philip in his heart raged at him. Here, indeed, was an unfortunate encounter. La Vigerie was riding to Schlafingen; la Vigerie on his road meets a departing Chevalier O'Hagan; la Vigerie on his arrival in the town will find another Chevalier O'Hagan, an identical Chevalier O'Hagan, under arrest at the palace.

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Monsieur de la Vigerie would have his amazing tale to tell, and all would be spoiled.

For a moment Philip felt fairly disconcerted. The unexpected had struck him a heavy blow and well-nigh knocked the wits out of him. He sat in his saddle for what seemed to him an age-long time, staring at the Frenchman with all his thoughts in a tumult, but with one clear determination riding their storm, a determination that la Vigerie must not be allowed to return to Schlafingen.

"Well," said la Vigerie, after Philip had stared at him for perhaps a second of silence, "do you not remember me, Monsieur O'Hagan?"

"I remember you very well, Monsieur the Marquis," Philip answered, quietly, though his tongue seemed too thick and his lips too dry to articulate a syllable. What he did not say, though the words were humming in his head, was, "You must not go back to Schlafingen; you shall not go back to Schlafingen."

La Vigerie laughed pleasantly.

"Why are you riding away in such a hurry? Surely, surely, you have not already had enough of Schlafingen; surely, surely, you are not giving ground before the Electoral Prince?"

Philip laughed as pleasantly as he could. The question was an impertinence; it was uttered impertinently, but he did not care to resent it on the instant; he had not yet decided how he should deal with Monsieur the Marquis.

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"Truly," he said, "I have had enough of Schlafingen for the present, and now I am journeying to Steinberg."

He mentioned a place that lay something in the direction of Sonnenburg, but a little farther off.

"Can you tell me where I should best and most pleasantly break the journey?"

"Easily," answered la Vigerie. "Dummer is a comfortable village, with a commendable inn, where they give good wine to drink and where there is—or was, since it is some little time since I was there—a pretty girl to kiss. You may rest contented at Dummer."

He made a gesture of salutation as if he thought he had said enough, and that it was time for him to resume his road. But Philip kept still and barred the way, and Teague, motionless at the turn of the road, watched the pair and wondered.

XXII

IN THE WAY-SIDE WOOD

“**M**ONSIEUR,” said Philip, very politely, “you know this merry country better than I do. Would it be straining what poor claim I have on your courtesy too far if I entreated you to ride some little way with me towards this Dummer you speak of, so that I might be very sure of being on the right road?”

The proposition did not appear to displease la Vigerie.

“Chevalier,” he said, “I shall be delighted to be your guide for a mile or two. It is pleasant in this desert to meet with one that is newly from France.”

With that he turned his horse about, and Philip and he rode forward on the high-road, with Teague following. La Vigerie was full of questions about France and Paris and the Parisian ladies, with which he plied Philip vigorously, and Philip answered him as well as he could though a thought at random. For all the while Philip was still busy thinking how he could prevent Monsieur de la Vigerie from returning to Schlafingen and finding his double there. Should he deal with la Vigerie as with a direct enemy, or should he entertain the hope of winning him as an ally?

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At last he resolved to say something. The road was stretching up a slope and on the crest of a hill there stood a little wood. At the pace they were going they would skirt the wood in a few minutes, and Philip settled in his mind that before they got so far something must be decided.

Monsieur de la Vigerie had just asked him, laughing, some scandalous question about a lady of the French court, of whom Philip knew, and desired to know, little more than the name. Instead of answering he gave la Vigerie a question.

"If a woman were in need of help, Monsieur the Marquis, and it were in your power to help her, would you give her your help?"

La Vigerie smiled in a coxcombical manner that exasperated Philip.

"My faith!" he protested; "a gentleman's help is always ready at a lady's need. It is to be hoped that the lady would be properly grateful."

Philip frowned and spoke coldly.

"Would you not help a woman in her need without hope of reward?"

La Vigerie sniggered and shrugged his shoulders.

"If the lady were comely," he asserted, "her better nature would suggest a pleasant recompense."

"There are women," Philip said, hotly, "that are neither vain nor frail, yet who may need a man's friendship."

"May be so—may be so," la Vigerie murmured, looking askance at Philip through lowered lids. "I

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am willing enough to take your word for it. Let us particularize, I entreat you. You are not favoring me with a philosophical treatise, I take it. You are thinking of some woman and some service."

"Sir," said Philip, "man to man, can I count on your help in a quandary?"

"I thought you were talking of a woman and a woman's need," la Vigerie replied. "Now you change ground and it is you that I am to help. What can I do for you, my dear Chevalier O'Hagan?"

"In helping me," said Philip, very gravely, "you will also help a woman."

La Vigerie looked him full in the face and there was a sinister glint in his eyes that belied the suavity of his face.

"Hark ye, Chevalier," he said, daffingly, "you had better a thousand times be plain with me. I fancied last night that you stood higher in a certain great lady's favor than pleased me at all. Now to-day, when I met you, I thought you were running away in disgrace, and I confess to you readily that my heart sang over your seeming discomfiture. For, very frankly, it is my desire to win that lady's favor."

"I named no name," cried Philip, angrily, "and I warn you—"

La Vigerie interrupted him, holding up his hand deprecatingly.

"For some reason known only to Heaven, you want my help in your desire to serve this lady. Once again, very frankly, I tell you that you ask too much.

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A lady so sadly married needs consolation, and—what would you have?—I wish—is it selfish?—that I may be the one to console.”

By this time, going at their even pace up the incline, they had just reached the point where the little wood began to clothe the slope of the hill on either side of the road. The wood was thick enough and promised depths of quiet.

“Sir,” said Philip, with a pleasantness of voice and manner that was whimsical in its contrast to the matter of his speech, “give me leave to tell you that for all your fine name and your fine bearing you are a very ill-mannered rascal and of a very mean, pitiful spirit.”

Monsieur de la Vigerie reined up his horse.

“What German wine has gone to your Irish head, my good fellow, that you talk so brawling in the prime of the day? Fie, sir, a gentleman should bear easier with a favored rival. This is raw school-boy talking.”

“Shall we take a walk in the wood, monsieur,” Philip questioned, still very politely. La Vigerie grinned at him.

“What!” he exclaimed, “are you so hot to make a quarrel? Some other time I shall be pleased to meet you and to give you a lesson in etiquette. But here on the highway, as it were, ah, sir, it reminds me too much of your late brother’s method of settling differences.”

“Monsieur the Marquis,” said Philip, gravely,

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"you have done fine things in the last few minutes. You have used a woman's name lightly; you have shrunk from a challenge, and you have wronged the memory of the dead. You do not deserve the honor of crossing swords with me, and yet, such is my extremity, that if you will not help, I must needs see that you do not hurt."

He leaned forward as he spoke and struck the Marquis very lightly across the face with his riding-whip. The Marquis looked steadily at him, and then from his face to the little wood and back again. Then he turned his horse's head in the direction of the trees and rode slowly forward with Philip at his side. When they were well off the road and the trees thickening about them he drew rein.

"Monsieur O'Hagan," he said, quietly, "I have ever had reason by hearsay to think well of you, but your conduct qualifies that opinion. I shall have the less regret in putting you away. Will your lackey look after our horses?"

He dismounted as he spoke and waited on the grass, holding his horse by the bridle and patting its nose gently. Philip signed to Teague, who came picking his way through the trees, and told him to take charge of the animals. Then he dismounted, and he and the Marquis walked in silence for some short distance till they came to a little open space.

"This, I think," said Philip, looking about him, "will serve for our purpose."

La Vigerie nodded assent.

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"You are reported a good swordsman," he said, "but if I may speak without immodesty I believe that when I dwelt in Paris I was held the best swordsman in the city, which is saying a good deal. You must not take it ill if I make this a mortal quarrel."

Philip made him no answer. He was busy stripping off his coat and waistcoat, which he carefully folded, for he was tender with his raiment as became a soldier's means. La Vigerie composedly followed his example. A thought seemed to strike him.

"I have heard something," he said, "of the devotion of the dependants of your race to the gentlemen of their sept. Can I feel assured that when I have done with you I may expect no molestation from your lackey, who, as I noted, carries a pretty pair of pistols in his holsters?"

Philip immediately turned and retraced his steps to the spot where Teague waited with the horses.

"Monsieur de la Vigerie and I," he said, "are about to have a little conversation together. If I should happen to have the worst of the argument I command you on your soul to interfere in no way with Monsieur de la Vigerie's departure from this place."

"Sure, Master Philip," Teague answered, "you will never let an unchancy foreigner best a boy of the O'Hagans, will you?"

"You have my orders," Philip said. To make all sure, however, he withdrew the pistols from the holsters of the lackey's horse and his own, and re-

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turning to where the Frenchman waited, he laid the fire-arms in a little pile on the ground.

"There are all the weapons we carry," he declared. "If the emergency you suggest should arise you are master of the situation."

La Vigerie saluted him.

"Very politely done," he affirmed; "very politely said. If man were always like master I had no need of precaution."

Philip unbuckled his belt, drew his sword from its scabbard, and laid belt and scabbard upon his discarded garments.

"Are you ready?" he asked; and la Vigerie instantly answered him.

"At your service."

The adversaries saluted and their swords crossed. The pair were well matched, for though the Frenchman was some years older than Philip, he was robust, active, in fine fettle, and as for his swordsmanship, it was perfectly true that he was the favorite pupil of Philibert de la Touche. Philip knew from the first meeting of the blades that he had to deal with a master of the small-sword.

But Philip also was a master of the weapon. He had begun his training in Dublin; he had perfected in Paris; he had a passion for the art since his childhood, and of late years he had never met his better. Nor had he met that better now.

The first few passes and parries were given and taken with deliberation, with calm; but the pace

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soon quickened. Philip was hot upon his purpose, which was to disable la Vigerie and so to compel him to come to terms. Somehow the thought of killing him made Philip sicken; the man was so nimble and trim and spirited: yet it was in the way of his trade to help blithe men to their death, and la Vigerie's existence was very much in the way of an enterprise, against the success of which neither his own life weighed nor the lives of an army of courtly gentlemen.

After a few moments' engagement Philip wounded his antagonist in the sword arm—an awkward wound, for his weapon went in by the Marquis's wrist and came out below the elbow. La Vigerie's sword fell to the ground, but instantly he pounced upon it, caught it with his left hand and was on guard again, his pale face smiling defiance.

"You are hurt!" cried Philip, but his enemy shook his head.

"Nothing; a scratch," he answered; "I can fight of both sides; all one to me which hand carries the blade."

"'Tis all one to me, too," Philip asserted, and shifted his sword to his left hand. It was quite true that the Marquis was as skilful with the one hand as with the other, and thereby an ordinary opponent would have found himself at a disadvantage. But Philip and John were born ambidextrous, and Philip, like John, from the first of his taking to arms had trained himself to handle a sword and fire a pistol as well with the left hand as with the right, and his pre-

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caution in this regard had more than once stood him in good stead. Now he would have been a match for la Vigerie under any circumstances, but after a few passes it was plain to him that la Vigerie's game was up. The Marquis could scarcely hold his sword. Blood was pouring from his pendent helpless right arm; his gallantry alone sustained him in a hopeless contest. Philip struck sharply against the Frenchman's blade and it fell from his nerveless fingers. La Vigerie seemed to recognize that as far as he was concerned the combat was at an end, for he made no effort to regain his weapon, but slipping his left hand behind his back caught and held his right hand. He still smiled defiantly at Philip though his face was very white.

"Sir," said Philip, "it is plain that you are at my mercy. Will you not take my terms now and save your life?"

He was but a little way from la Vigerie. He had but to extend his arm to transfix him. La Vigerie eyed him unmoved.

"You are ready and pleasant with your weapon and you have me at a vantage. But I'll never change my mind for an Irish blade."

Philip lengthened his sword arm till his point was hard on la Vigerie's breast, and his gaze was met by the steady stare of la Vigerie's bright, unflinching eyes. Philip dropped his point to the ground with an oath.

"Monsieur," he said, wistfully, "I think in the

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cause I serve I should do right to make sure of you, and do wrong to give you the go-by. But I cannot stick you like this—just I cannot do it, though it proves me a weak man. So I demand nothing of you as a right, but I beg of you one thing as a favor.”

“What is that?” la Vigerie asked, calmly, though his face was twisted with pain.

“That when you return to Schlafingen you say nothing of our meeting here, nothing of seeing me.”

“My faith,” said la Vigerie, “it has proved no such pleasant or profitable meeting for me that I should seek to brag of it.”

He seemed as about to say more, but suddenly stopped; his whiteness grew painfully whiter, he reeled and then dropped forward on his knees in the grass. Philip was by his side in an instant supporting him.

“Your wound needs tending,” he cried. La Vigerie shook his head.

“It is nothing,” he murmured, but Philip, looking at the injured arm, saw that la Vigerie was lying very gallantly. He whistled for Teague, who came running through the trees, and between them they did their best—which was fairly skilful—for the Frenchman’s wound, bandaging his arm with strips torn from his shirt. Then Philip gave la Vigerie to drink from the silver flask that Teague always carried, and saw with satisfaction that something of their natural color came back to the hurt man’s cheeks. It was not until afterwards, and when he was on the

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road again, that Philip reflected ironically upon the solicitude he displayed in the restoration of a man whom, half an hour before, he had been very bloodily determined to kill.

By-and-by la Vigerie came out of his semi-swoon and was making to thank Philip for his care, but Philip stayed him.

"I must be on the road again," he said, "and my business gives me little ease, but I would be glad to see you bestowed in safety before I go forward."

"Chevalier," answered la Vigerie, "you are a very polite gentleman, and in my need I will take you at your word. My country-house is but a little way from here, I was coming thence when I met you; if you will help me to my horse and ride with me to my gates I shall be grateful to you, for, indeed, I feel such a weak fool that I might fall off by the road-side if none were by to succor me."

Then Philip and Teague between them put his coats about la Vigerie as well as might be without galling his injured arm, and then helped him to his horse and lifted him into his saddle, and Philip rode by his side with Teague following, la Vigerie directing them the way they should go. And they had not ridden far by a side road when they saw below them in a dip of the land, a very pleasant country villa bowered in trees and a garden behind it girdled with a high wall. From the elevation where they were Philip could see that there were many women in the garden and that they seemed to be young and comely.

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He said no word on what he saw, but la Vigerie, who had kept silent as they rode because of his discomfiture and his weakness and his pain, saw that Philip saw, and smiled and said:

"I think that I shall be well cared for in that place and have no cause for loneliness."

"I could wish you graver company till you were well of your wound," said Philip, "for as I think, you will be in fever to-night and will need quiet nursing."

La Vigerie laughed.

"They will do as they are told. They are good girls. Maybe some day you will visit me and judge for yourself."

Philip inclined his head somewhat stiffly. He had never cared for such fashions, and now, in his mood of exaltation, he thought that the only noble way of life was to love one lady without hope of other reward than to serve her loyally while he lived. La Vigerie saw the look on his face and laughed again.

"We must all take our pleasures as we may," he said; "I am very well content with my garden of girls."

By this time they were at the gate, and the garden out of sight, and Teague, by the bidding of the wounded gentleman, pulled at the gate bell. As its noise clattered and rattled, la Vigerie turned to Philip.

"I am safe at home now," he said, "and need not keep you longer, though if you were not pressed

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for time I would beg you to enter and refresh yourself and judge of my taste."

Philip shook his head without speaking, and la Vigerie went on:

"Since that may not be I wish you a good-day with many thanks, and I pass you my word that I will say nothing at Schlafingen of our meeting. Indeed," he added, with a dry look at his helpless arm, "as I said, it is not a matter that I greatly care to think upon, much less talk about."

Philip heard footsteps coming to the gate; there was nothing more he could do for his companion, who was sure to be well tended in his own house and by his own people. So as the gate began to turn upon its hinges he saluted la Vigerie, and he and Teague rode briskly away in the direction of the main road.

XXIII

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JOHN was chaffering gallantly with the von Lutten in the long gallery where ancestral Electors adorned the walls. He said this to her, he said that to her; he was as giddy as you please, and she laughed at all his quips. He was beginning to tire of her somewhat luscious tyranny, but he knew that he must submit for the instant, always accepting pleasure for the sake of business. So he smiled into her smiling face, and when they came to the place of parting he kissed her hand very tenderly, and then reading invitation in her eye, he kissed her lips, and she laughed and patted his cheek and ran and left him. John watched her out of sight and then turned on his heel to find that he was not, as he had believed, alone in the gallery. He found himself facing a woman, beautiful, fair-haired, young, a woman with a face that was meant for happiness, but that had sadness thrust upon it like a mask, a woman whose face was now not so much sad or happy as angry.

"So, Monsieur O'Hagan," she said, "I heard you were a prisoner, but I did not know you were in the chains of this lady."

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John knew who the woman was, but he said nothing, only looked at her with a fixed respect. She was going to speak again, and still angrily, when suddenly she drew back from him with a cry, fear in her eyes and voice and in her trembling frame.

"My God!" she ejaculated; "who are you?"

John made her his most reverend bow.

"Have no fear," he said. "This is a kind of miracle, but a natural one. You are the Princess Dorothea?"

She nodded, staring at him, unable to speak.

"I am Philip's brother, I am Philip's double. I am John O'Hagan at your service, though I pass for Philip O'Hagan to every man and woman in this place."

Dorothea gave a great sigh.

"You are Philip's brother?"

John bowed again.

"That's the best thing about me, being Philip's brother, and the most useful thing just now, I'm thinking. It pleased Providence to make us as like as two peas and as fond of each other as David and Jonathan."

"Where is Philip?" she asked, eagerly. "What has happened to Philip?"

"Philip is by this time well on his way to Sonnenburg, in the hope of winning your freedom. If it pleases your serene highness to listen, I will tell you the whole story."

They paced slowly up and down the deserted gallery with the eyes of ancient Electors and Electresses upon

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them, sourly following them from the walls. As they paced, John told her all that had happened from his entry into Paris, and Dorothea listened and marvelled. Her companion spoke with the voice of Philip, but with a manner more exuberant; when she looked into his face she knew that it was not the face of Philip, but she could not tell how she knew it, for to the most scrutinizing eye every feature seemed identical. She had heard of such similarity in twin children, but she had never known an instance till now, and this instance defied all likelihood in its triumph of resemblance; but she knew none the less that for her, if for no other being in the world, John would always be John and Philip always Philip.

Between them ere they parted they settled on their plan of campaign. She was to speak ever and act ever as if John had been the cherished playmate of her youth; she was to show him the most cordial friendship, to treat him with the most friendly indifference.

He, on his side, was to serve her with the most chivalrous, respectful homage, but was to be prodigal of assiduities to other ladies, extravagant in admiration, a squire of all the dames. As there was nothing to be done till Philip's return from Sonnenburg, Dorothea and John were never to arouse suspicion by risking colloquies together, though on the other hand they were never to go to the opposite extreme of seeming to avoid each other unnecessarily. They were just to be old friends, each of whom had too

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much to occupy them to think overmuch on old friendship. John was even for Dorothea showing a little more condescension to the gentlemen at court, who must needs, as he guessed, desire her smiles, but here Dorothea was inexorable, and John surrendered and thought Philip fortunate in such a friend.

When they had arranged all between them she left him to muse on the many things that may happen in the space of a single day.

The next morning found John, as it were, at the top of the tree. He had dined at the Elector's table and delighted the Elector with his ready wit, his world-wisdom, his good spirits, that could vent themselves in tales racy enough to tickle the tired nerves of the aged Prince. He had supped with Max and a select party of Max's following, and he had won the respect, wellnigh the regard, of the Electoral Prince by his gift of appreciating good liquor and his capacity for absorbing it. The fact was, John had a good head to start with, backed by a better manner. He drank enough to send many another man under the mahogany, but he did not drink as much as he seemed to drink. He had a way of taking a sip that made it seem like a Gargantuan swallow, and he allowed himself to affect a slight air of intoxication, while his head was still as clear as a bell, which added a Bacchic grace to the effect of his apparently endless potations. He drank Prince Max to bed, but managed to keep him good-humored all the time. Wherefore the next day both father and son were loud in their praises of the

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Chevalier O'Hagan, and as day succeeded day John kept in their good graces—grew in greatness and popularity.

But even grandeur, even popularity, have their disadvantages, and John had this truth brought home to him in a manner at once fantastic, attractive, and exasperating. It would have surprised him mightily but a little while back, if he had been prophesied annoyance through the patent admiration, the suggested affection, of a young and pretty girl. Yet this was exactly what happened. It was not John's fault at all, for he had taken no notice of the girl—frankly thought her a baggage, and passed her by in his chase of dames, in his proclaimed flirtations. It was all the fault of the Ehrenberg herself. Melusine threw herself figuratively at John's head and literally at John's feet. For a day or two John, hitherto heedless, found himself catching the girl in a flagrant game of ogles. When he looked at her she flushed, smiled, and if the smile were not reciprocated, sighed. John's native sense compelled him to admit that she looked pretty when she smiled and prettier when she sighed. When he did not look at her she looked at him; when Prince Max was not at hand she looked so intently, so persistently, that presently John was sure to look in her direction, meet her eye, and be favored with the enticing smile and the successive sigh. This was at court functions, dances, card-parties, banquets, where, though she distinguished him with her glances, Clytie soliciting the sun, she had no speech with him.

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John knew that she was interested, that his indifference piqued, but she was not at all his business. It was no part of his purpose to make bad blood between himself and the Electoral Prince by slipping into even the most innocent intrigue with his minion.

But Melusine meant to have speech with John, and did have speech with him, whether he willed it or no. One day, when he had been quite awhile at court, he was coming down a corridor from an audience with the Elector. The corridor looked through the eye-holes of long, deep-embraured windows on to the park. From behind a curtain Melusine glided and stood directly in his way. Walking swiftly, he was obliged by courtesy to stay his pace; whistling softly, he was obliged by courtesy to strangle his music. She stood before him looking very demure, with her eyelids drooped; when she lifted them as she did in an instant she seemed both sly and shy, defiant and frightened. John stared at her, not knowing what to say, what to do. She was fumbling with her handkerchief as if she had hoped to pick words from its fabric. The fine linen denying her, she found words for herself.

"Why do you dislike me?" she asked, plaintively. "Why do you despise me? Am I so very bad that you cannot throw me a glance?"

It must frankly be admitted that John's standard of ethical conduct was not greatly offended by a friendship between a court lady and a prince. Such friendships were in the way of the world; he had seen

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too many of them to be surprised to-day. But he did not like Melusine, because he believed that she was a willing kinswoman of the league against the happiness of Dorothea; and of Dorothea John, as Philip, as Philip's brother, and, indeed, even as John, was the very devoted servant.

Yet it was hard to feel hostile to the Ehrenberg girl just at that moment. She was more like a pretty plump doll than ever. The childish contribution of her smooth face invested her with a kind of nursery pathos, and seemed to minimize any fault or folly of hers to the level of broken plaything or stolen jam. John was touched.

"Indeed," he began, gently, "I do not despise you. Pray do not think that."

This assurance seemed to bring little comfort to the girl. "But you dislike me," she bleated; "you do not deny that you dislike me?"

This was a more awkward matter for John's gallantry. He did dislike her for Dorothea's sake, but he found it hard to admit as much to her, a suppliant. So he said nothing at all for a moment, but looked somewhat ruefully at her, wondering what he should say. Melusine glanced rapidly around her, satisfied herself that she and the soldier were indeed alone in the corridor, and then, much to John's surprise and confusion, she dropped to her knees at his feet, her hoops billowing about her so that she seemed the ruddy central rose of all the roses painted on her floreated skirts.

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"Do not dislike me," she sobbed; "do not despise me. What can I do? I mean no offence to your idol, but I cannot help myself if his highness—"

Her voice faltered into silence. John bent over her and took her hand to help her to rise. Instantly she clasped his hand in both of hers, and suffering herself to be lifted to her feet she drooped against John's breast and seemed inclined to remain there. This was more than John had bargained for, and he gently righted her as he might have restored to the perpendicular a falling doll.

"My dear," he said, cheerfully, as the girl stood submissively before him with lowered lids and tear-stains dabbling her rouge, "I am willing to give you credit for the very best intentions, but I don't know what you mean when you speak of my idol."

The girl raised her eyelids and looked at him steadily with her china-blue eyes.

"Yes, you do," she answered him, defiantly; "yes, you do. She is your idol; why should you deny it? I saw it on the night of the minuet. I was very frightened, but I saw your eyes and I knew that you could have killed Prince Max then for insulting her, and me for being the cause of her hurt. You cannot deny that."

"Good Lord!" thought John; "the minx is not so simple. But this kind of talk will not do at all."

"My dear," he insisted, "I can and do deny it. I had no such thoughts on the occasion you refer to about either yourself or a certain exalted personage,

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whom perhaps it would be just as well to keep nameless."

"Do you mean to tell me," the girl persisted, "that you are not in love with the Prin—"

John put his hand upon her pink mouth. It was like touching a rose.

"No names, dear young lady, for the love of Heaven," he entreated. "Your questions are amazingly indiscreet, but I can assure you in all honesty that I cherish no such feelings as you suggest towards the person that I think I may take it for granted that you have in your mind."

The girl looked at him steadfastly.

"On your honor?" she questioned.

John found himself attracted against his will by the childishness, the candor that still were left to this lady in spite of the company she kept and her nights of riot.

"On my honor," he assured her, "though I do not think that a gentleman's word needs any other word to back it."

"I think you have changed since the night of the masquerade," Melusine murmured. "But if you did love her, would you think it wrong in you?"

"Certainly not," honest John answered, frankly. "The lady is tied to a gentleman whose natural might, if he were not a particular friend of mine, call for epithets plain-spoken and free. I could not think it wrong to offer consolation—had I the power to console—to so unfortunate a lady."

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Melusine looked at him queerly, the girl in her struggling against so much that was far from girlish.

"Then why do you think it wrong of me to offer consolation to an unfortunate gentleman?"

John staggered at the unexpected attack. There seemed a vast difference to him between the ignoble amours of a profligate prince with a young hussy who was foolish and stupid, and the chivalrous devotion of a high-spirited gentleman to a high-spirited queen of women. But at the moment he felt that he would be gravelled if he tried to explain the chasm between the two phases of passion to the over-inquisitive minion. And, indeed, he felt tender and pitiful towards Melusine.

"God forgive me," he sighed, "that I should presume to judge man or woman"—he made a long pause, then added, "or child," and, stooping, kissed Melusine on the forehead and so left her.

Life did not become easier to John after this whimsical interview with Melusine. The girl was reckless in her display of interest, during Max's absence, and though John was resolute to ignore her advances and avoid her company, he was powerless to prevent her from expressing with eye and tongue her admiration for the handsome stranger. It was a new thing for John to hang back from the advances of a pretty woman, and only the conditions under which he lived could have compelled him to such reticence, and to what was still more galling, the humiliating possibility that his reticence might be attributed by the

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girl herself, and by those who observed her, to his fear of the Electoral Prince. John, who hated the Electoral Prince more cordially the more he was thrown into his society, would have been pleased enough to charm his sweetheart from him first and run him through the body afterwards, if he made a quarrel of it. But for the time being he was denied indulgence in either humor. He was not John O'Hagan, reckless adventurer, fighting for his own hand and wooing for his own heart, but Philip O'Hagan, sworn soldier of Dorothea, pledged to the very desperate enterprise of rescuing this blond German Andromeda from the wallowing monster of Schlafingen. He had to keep the Electoral Prince in good-humor; he had to keep Madame von Lutten in good-humor; he had to persuade Dorothea to a patience little familiar to her, and now all his labor seemed to be imperilled by the fancy of a headstrong miss who was half school-girl and half courtesan.

John's face was imperturbably good-humored, but in his breast black despair took lodging. There came no news of Philip; there came no news from Sonnenburg. Schlafingen might have been some enchanted fairy-land, cinctured with some wizard's wall, for all the knowledge it had, not indeed of the outer world, but of the wanderer who meant the world to Dorothea and John.

Now in this stagnant atmosphere of expectation this blundering butterfly of a girl must needs flutter her wings, trying to allure an anxious man, heed-

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lessly setting apparent friends by the ears. It was exasperating to madness, but to confide, or half confide, or quarter confide in Miss Melusine would have been no less a descent to insanity. John would have liked to have given her a good shaking, a good slapping, for falling in love with him so inopportunately. But that course was unfortunately out of the question, though what Max might take it into his head or into his hands to do when he took note of the ogling was quite a different matter.

XXIV

SONNENBURG'S DUKE

THE Grand-Duke of Sonnenburg was a very different kind of potentate to his brother potentate of Schlafingen. It was not that he denied himself wine or that he disliked women, but that to those common bases of taste among the petty German princes of his day, he planted or grafted other tastes and inclinations which he had found satisfactory, although for the most part they earned him the ridicule, if not the contempt, of his robust colleagues. In his early manhood he had travelled in Italy, and he had brought back from his travels something more than the vices and maladies which were the usual profit of the grand tour for princely Teutonic travellers. He had been attracted by pictures, by statuary, by prints, above all, by medals. Splendidly ignorant of everything belonging to the practise of the arts, it pleased him to consider himself a connoisseur, and to rate as something higher than his ducal title the cabalistic initials that denoted him member of this, that, and the other learned Italian society. He belonged to the Cimento, of course; he lay in the Arcadian shades of Della Crusca, and he read with little profit and

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collected with infinite pains all the essays, excursions, and treatises with which such solemn bodies enriched the world.

He came back from Italy to Sonnenburg with an amazing collection of pictures—good, bad, and indifferent; the good being for the most part extremely clever forgeries, and the downright bad the only ones which authority could assert to be at least genuine productions of their age. He came back with a great many noseless busts, headless torsos, odd arms and legs, and fingers that had, or might have belonged, in the far away, to some old Roman reproduction of some familiar Greek type—Venus, or Apollo, or Mercury. He had a walk especially constructed in his garden, along which he set up on marble pillars the busts of the sages among the ancients such as he had seen in this or that Italian garden, and in this Philosopher's Walk, as he chose to call it, it pleased him to pass a portion of each day, in what he believed to be the improvement of his mind, in conversation with his librarian or with the curator of what he called his Museum of Antiquities.

In this harmless passion the hours and days drifted pleasantly by. Since his daughter's marriage he had no cares to distress him other than those attendant upon the owner of a library and the possessor of a Museum of Antiquities, and his modest revenues were expended for the most part in the patient acquisition of other forged paintings and valueless fragments of marble which from time to time were

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brought under his notice by the agents of such wares. He seemed to be walking peacefully through an avenue of plaster busts to a sunny old age, ripened with sound wines and sham eruditions, and enlivened by brisk, if obvious, quotations from Horace. For him the grapes of Sonnenburg distilled lethe; for him the bread with carraways in it, for which Sonnenburg was famous, was as the fruit of the lotus; and in his meaningless studies, undisturbed by his amiable wife, undisturbed by his amiable mistress, to each of whom his gracious care was equally extended, the golden time slipped by and he almost forgot that he ever had a daughter, and seldom regretted that he never had a son.

Surely it was hard of fate to interfere so violently with the serene old gentleman, flinging a vehement rider, booted and spurred and muddy, as it were, from the very saddle of his horse, into the tranquil twilight and dedicated peace of the Philosopher's Walk.

The Grand-Duke's younger brother and heir was a man made in a very different mould. He was a soldier of the old school, to whom soldiering was a serious business unassociated either with dandyism or swashbucklery; a business to be undertaken in a serious spirit and to be carried out to its extremest consequences with the same note of grave determination. He was also in his way a man of letters, and it was known, or at least believed by those—and they were few—who were admitted to his intimacy, that he had been engaged for many years in compiling his memoirs. These memoirs, said those who knew or

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affected to know, would contain much to throw light on the secret history of the petty states of Germany, from the days when Count Wolfram first entered upon that career of arms which had carried him over so many battle-fields to so many courts.

They were said to be scandalous, and it would have been impossible for any memoirs dealing with the little German principalities to be other than scandalous. But their scandal, so it was said, lacked garrulity, and was written down austere with the iron pen of a Tacitus. For his virtuoso, connoisseur brother, Wolfram felt an affectionate contempt, or a contemptuous affection, whichever you please, which always had the effect of embarrassing not a little that good-humored humbug. The expression of Wolfram's face when the Duke of Sonnenburg showed him some of his sprawling latter-day Dianas or Venuses, intolerably pink and white, was not of a kind to encourage conversation on chiaroscuro and carnations and beauty of form, and Wolfram's freely expressed opinion of the pagan fragments—busts and torsos, and arms and legs and fingers—as a rubbish heap, had served decisively to close against him the doors of the Museum of Antiquities.

But the very fact that Wolfram was in the eyes of the Duke so intolerable a Goth in matters of taste and connoisseurship, made him a person to whom the Duke was inclined instinctively to turn on any occasion which called for consideration of any matter more serious than the ascription of some square of

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canvas to this or that follower of Rubens, or identification of some chunk of marble with a thigh of a Diana or a shoulder of a Hercules. For affairs of state the Duke had little liking, and less capacity, and he had fondly hoped that he had said farewell to them for ever, after he had, as he comfortably put it, so happily married his daughter to the Electoral Prince of Schlawingen. And now it was all to begin again and all about this very daughter, and all because the happy marriage was not, it appeared, really so very happy after all.

The Duke was fond of his daughter, as he was fond, after a flabby fashion, of everything that appertained at all nearly to him, as he was fond of his wife, as he was fond of his mistress, as he was fond of his librarian and the curator of his museum. He was not fond of his brother Wolfram, but his emotions with regard to him were of a less flaccid texture and wrung from him something in the nature of the positive emotions of admiration and dislike.

Being fond of his daughter he must inevitably regret that she should find herself unhappy, but he was driven to the reflection that the unhappiness might possibly be exaggerated and might possibly be in some measure of her own seeking. He remembered her wilful, he remembered her imperious, and these were not, he frankly admitted, qualities likely to endear a woman to the average little German tyrant. But the average little German tyrant was well enough in his way if you always let him have his

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way and never thought to cross his whims or be vexed if he were habitually drunk, or kept a harem, or occasionally employed a cudgel. This, it would seem, was about the worst that could be said of the Electoral Prince, and if that were all, the Electoral Prince was not very dissimilar to nine out of ten of the other Electoral princes and heirs to duchies at that moment sprawling under the German sun. It seemed clear to a distracted sovereign that now, if ever, was the time for consultation with that grim-visaged, memoir-writing brother, whose experiences must serve him with a dozen examples whereby to guide the vacillating mind of a troubled connoisseur.

To Wolfram accordingly he despatched a messenger bidding him ride for his life (the distance between the Schloss and Duke Wolfram's castle was a little under ten miles), and he requested Philip not to perplex him with further details or complaints until Wolfram's arrival. Philip, irritated by the Duke's triviality, and indignant at his apathy, asked and readily obtained permission to leave the ducal presence. The Duke gave him in charge of his librarian with the injunction to have him well entertained and with the assurance that he should be summoned the moment that Wolfram arrived at the castle. This arranged, the Duke returned to his conversation with the curator respecting the rearrangement of a tray of medals, and Philip, in an ill-humor that he found it difficult to conceal, quitted the Philosopher's Walk at the heels of the librarian.

XXV

IN A LIBRARY

THE librarian displayed an almost embarrassing desire to be obliging and polite to Philip. As they walked through the gardens in the direction of the Schloss he babbled a great deal of local history and antiquities into singularly unattentive ears. Philip's memory was busy repeopling the place with the deeds and speech of two childish figures that had played in those ways so many years ago, and while his companion prattled of the actions of past Electors and was steadily ascending the ladder of German history in the direction of Charlemagne, Philip was thinking of an Irish boy who told tales of the heroes of Ireland in passable French to a gold-haired and imperious girl. Little had changed in the castle in all the years that had passed since Philip rode away from it on that fateful morning. Custom ruled with conservative sceptre in Sonnenburg, and if the gardeners were not the same as those that laid out its terraces and tended its parterres of old, their traditions had been accepted and faithfully adhered to by their successors. There were the same banks of flowers in the same place, showing the same colors; there were the same formal

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walks and hedges which had not seemed so formal to young eyes as they now showed to the same spectator after so wide an experience of other gardens in other lands. The same swans seemed to be floating on the green waters of the moat and the very sunshine seemed to retain that romantic quality which had made the place an enchanted paradise for the boy and girl.

Now the game of youth had grown to grim reality, and the hero of the childish legend, ever busy in the rescue of a golden-haired heroine from imaginary dragons, ogres, bandits, and other pleasing monsters of romance, stood in the same scenes striving his best to redeem his Princess in reality from the clutches of an uglier enemy than his play-time fancy had invented.

It was small wonder, therefore, that Philip heard little of, and heeded less, the voluble flood of information which the librarian was glibly reeling off. Some quite inappropriate answer of Philip's to some statement on the librarian's part, which seemed to call for some kind of acknowledgment or comment, had the effect at last of conveying to the librarian the impression that he was sowing his seed in somewhat fruitless, if not thankless, soil.

"I perceive, sir," he said, with a certain sourness, "that the history of our principality does not seem to you as interesting as it does to those of us that have the honor to dwell within its borders."

Philip stared at the man in some astonishment.

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He had almost forgotten his existence, but did not wish to be uncivil.

"I must ask your pardon, sir," he said. "My mind was something engrossed with urgent private affairs and my attention may have wandered a little from your attractive narrative, but I can assure you that I take a very deep concern in the history of Sonnenburg."

Somewhat reassured by Philip's explanation, the librarian resumed the thread of his narrative to a listener now sedulous in attention, until they had entered the Schloss and made their way to the private apartment of the librarian. Here Philip was left alone for a few minutes while the librarian absented himself to give some orders; and here Philip paced up and down, regarding with a listless eye the long line of shelves filled with volumes of all shapes and sizes, and wondering what he should do if Count Wolfram proved to be as passively intractable a person as his brother, the Duke.

Presently the librarian returned and at his heels came a brace of servants bearing the materials for a sufficiently generous meal. In a twinkling the table was spread and laden with many kinds of meats and pasties, supported by many bottles of wine. The librarian requested his guest to be seated, and, placing himself opposite, proceeded to play the part of host with as much enthusiasm as a few minutes before he had played the part of preceptor. The Duke's librarian, like the Duke, his master, was a lover of

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good things. He called himself, as the Duke his master called himself, an epicurean, in self-satisfied defiance of the real meaning of the philosophy of Epicurus, and nothing, not even the acquisition of a scarce folio or the unrolling of a rare charter, gave him more pleasure than to play the boon-companion at a well-graced board.

Philip himself, in spite of his cares and agitations, was too much of a soldier of fortune to allow himself to forget that he was a human being with a human being's healthy appetite, now properly sharpened by a long ride and a long fast. So he acquiesced cheerfully enough with the librarian's solicitations to eat, and he very readily met his host's challenge to taste a very excellent vintage reserved for the drinking of the Grand-Duke and those whom the Grand-Duke favored.

The little man filled a large glass of Rhenish, and, rising, smilingly pledged Philip.

"Sir," he said, "I consider it a great privilege to welcome you to my poor table."

Here he quoted various scraps of Latinity, Horatian for the most part, in praise of cheer and guest greeting, which Philip accepted amiably.

"Immersed," the librarian went on, "as I am and have ever been from my youth upward in the society of books, for truly I think that round my lips, as round the lips of Plato, the bees gathered, I have never in the fellowship of letters forgotten my admiration for the man of action, nor failed to remember

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that the myrtle of the poet may sometimes conceal the sword of the hero. You, sir, are essentially a man of action. You are at home in the bivouac and the camp, on the battle-field and in the sack of cities; for you the lighter, brighter pleasures of life, the dance, the song, the smile, the wine-cup, are all the graceful accessories, the adorning jewels, of the strenuous career of steel."

Philip drank moodily from his glass. He did not see himself very clearly in the whimsical picture painted with such enthusiasm by his entertainer, but he saw that the little librarian was desperately in earnest and he nodded his head good-humoredly. What he was really thinking all the time was: "How soon shall I hear that Count Wolfram is at the Schloss?"

With unabated zeal the librarian continued his discourse.

"You must not think, sir," he said, "that because I am a scholar all the springs of vigor in my body have run to ink. There have been times when I, too, have envied the man of action, even times when it has occurred to me that, given an appropriate time and fitting conditions, I might myself be, or at least might have been, a man of action."

The lean image in neat black velvet and the twisted periwig stiffened itself as he spoke, and seemed to expand and to expire a martial ardor. He did not represent in any way what Philip would have considered a man of action, though he remembered

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betimes, before he smiled, that more than one illustrious general that had carried the lilies of France to victory, scarcely cut a more heroic figure in the field than the Duke of Sonnenburg's librarian. The librarian went on:

"I am myself no great master of the small-sword, but I have absorbed the theory of the white arm from many books, and I believe that I could, on paper, put an army into action and carry out the highest laws of strategy in a fashion that would, again on paper, meet the approval of a great commander. But these are my dreams, sir, like the toys that a child plays with and believes itself a knight; and presently I awake and rub my eyes and find myself staring at my book-shelves, and the noise of the cannon dies away, and the march of the army ceases, the banners are blown out of sight and the clarions quaver into silence, and I resume with a smile and a sigh my history of the Dukes of Sonnenburg. Once again, your health, Chevalier; I drink to the man of action."

And the little man gulped off his goblet of yellow wine with a relish, and sat down again, winking whimsically and benignly at Philip, somewhat embarrassed by the praise and the confession.

"My dear sir," Philip began, "you must not think that if I am, as you are pleased to call me, a man of action, I am therefore absolutely in relation to you what the Goth was to Ovid. I have not, it is true, had much time in my life for the reading of books—"

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"Ah! you have lived them," the little man interrupted with a sigh.

"But I come from a land where every breath of air whispers fairy-tales, and where beautiful legends linger in the hollows of every hill. There are gods and heroes of my native land who seem as familiar to me as my most familiar friend, and I should be sorry to think that my wandering life had ever carried me out of sympathy with all the sweet and simple things of which peasants and children and poets love to whisper by the fire."

The librarian rose in a rapture, and, skirting the table, flung his arms about Philip, and before he could be prevented, kissed him lustily on both cheeks. Then he resumed his seat and his wine and his affable chatter.

XXVI

COUNT WOLFRAM

ALTHOUGH the librarian was diverting enough, and although his provender was excellent, Philip was heartily tired of the one and the other in a very little while. His anxieties and alarms were clamorous, he could think of nothing but the pale face of the lady for whom he had ridden on this ticklish adventure, and it was with something like a cry of joy that he greeted the announcement made by a servant that the Duke desired his attendance, for he knew that this summons meant the arrival of Count Wolfram, and the settlement one way or another of his hopes.

Hurriedly rising and thanking his host, Philip followed the servant through many rooms and passages to the Duke's private apartments. Here he found the Duke seated in company with a tall, lean, grim piece of soldier's flesh, whom he knew to be Count Wolfram, though he had never seen him before. The Duke presented Philip to his brother, who accepted the presentation curtly, and then looking with an air of embarrassment from one to the other, said he supposed the best thing would be for the Chevalier

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to say his say. Count Wolfram nodded; he never spoke when speech was by any possibility to be avoided, and Philip, trying hard to read some answer to his desire in the inscrutable face, followed the lead the Duke had given him. As briefly, as simply, and as strongly as he could, he painted a picture of the condition of affairs at Schlafingen. He emphasized, without exaggeration, the brutalities, the infidelities, and the intemperance of the Electoral Prince. He described the kind of companions whom the Prince had chosen for his intimates and whom he desired to make the intimates of his wife. He narrated the latest indignity which the Prince had put upon the Duke's daughter by endeavoring to make her accept his newest mistress as a companion in a dance. He told of the Prince's fury at being foiled in his purpose, and of his fierce threats of physical violence which had only been stayed by the direct intervention of the Elector himself. Then, with every effort to seem impartial and austere, he depicted the Princess herself, with her patience under innumerable insults, her courage in the face of many dangers, her sense that her position had now become unbearable, and her earnest desire to escape from her hideous surroundings to a life, no matter how secluded, under the shelter of her father's roof. All this that father had already heard, and he fidgeted with his fingers as he listened, evidently inclined to grumble not a little at an unappreciative Providence that had not endowed him with a daughter better equipped for companion-

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ship with a turbulent and full-blooded Electoral Prince.

Count Wolfram listened, as immovable, as silent, till Philip had finished his story, and remained immovable and silent after Philip had made an end. At last the agitated Grand-Duke felt himself compelled to break the awkward silence. He turned with a deprecatory cough to his rigid brother.

"Surely you will agree with me, Wolfram," he said, hesitatingly, "that we must indeed deplore, deeply deplore, the unfortunate conditions of Dorothea's life; but surely also you must agree with me that it would be a matter of the extremest delicacy for us to interfere actively in the matter?"

He paused, as if hoping for some signal of consent from his taciturn companion, but Wolfram made no sign and spoke no word, and the embarrassed Grand-Duke rambled on:

"Dorothea is a sensitive girl, a high-minded girl, and no doubt the Electoral Prince is sadly lacking in some of those graces, those softer parts of life which are calculated to endear a husband to such a woman."

He smiled a little fatly as he spoke, to imply delicately that in his case he had been fortunate in providing his wife with those graces and softer parts that had so much endeared him to her.

"But," he went on, "it is difficult and dangerous to interfere in these family quarrels. Dorothea is high-strung; Dorothea is imaginative; Dorothea may—indeed, Dorothea must—exaggerate. This gentleman"

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—he waved his hand towards Philip—“is sympathetic, perhaps, also, imaginative; he may—I don’t say he does—but he, too, may exaggerate.”

He waved his hand at Philip as if to stifle the protest which Philip was about to make, and Philip, his eyes fixed on the changeless face of Wolfram, let his protest die undelivered. The Grand-Duke went on:

“The marriage was in every respect a desirable, a very desirable alliance. When Prince Max succeeds to his estimable father he will be one of the leading sovereigns in Germany, and Dorothea, as his wife, will have a position higher than the means, though not the blood, of our house had any reason to expect. You cannot have everything in life; you must—”

The Grand-Duke paused as if seeking for inspiration, and then went on as if divinely inspired.

“You must take the rough with the smooth. I take it, therefore, brother, that in the face of the unanswerable arguments I have addressed to you, you will agree with me that we should, at first at all events, do very little in this matter, and that little with the utmost caution, circumspection, discretion, and delay.”

His voice wavered away into silence after the last word—a favorite word of the Duke’s—who was always for delaying the doing of anything that had no connection with those artistic and antiquarian pursuits that adorned his distinguished leisure.

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Philip, weary of the foolish voice, of the foolish face, of the foolish man, looked at Count Wolfram as eagerly as a supplicant might have stared at the Delphic sibyl.

Count Wolfram prolonged his habitual silence to what seemed to Philip an age-long time. When he broke it he addressed himself, not to his brother but to Philip.

"You are the Chevalier O'Hagan," he said, affirmatively, and then, half-interrogatively, half-affirmatively, "the Illustrious O'Hagan?"

Philip smiled slightly.

"People have sometimes called me so in jest," he said.

"And in earnest," Count Wolfram went on, gravely. "I know your story, Chevalier, and from what I know of it, I do not consider the epithet infelicitous."

Philip bowed.

"You are a brave soldier, a gallant and a daring man; report also has it that you are a gallant and a daring wooer. May I ask, sir, what business you have with the affairs of state at Schlafingen?"

"You have called me just now," Philip answered, "a brave and a gallant man. I have such business with the affairs of state at Schlafingen as any brave and gallant man would have and should have who finds that those affairs of state mean the torturing of an unhappy woman by a brutal and profligate ruffian."

"Strong words, strong words," the Duke began,

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deprecatingly, but a glance from his brother's eye froze him into silence.

"Do you take it upon yourself, Chevalier," the Count went on, "to act as knight-errant for every lady who may not find her husband the ideal of her virgin dreams?"

Philip colored a little. There was a faint note of irony in the Count's voice, though no suggestion of any emotion showed on his impassive face.

"I should always, I hope," said Philip, "try to befriend any woman that needed a friend, but in this case I had, and have the honor to be a close and old friend of the lady of whom we are speaking."

Although Count Wolfram had not looked in his brother's direction, his brother made haste to speak as if Wolfram had questioned him.

"They were boy and girl together here," he said, hurriedly, "years ago. They used to play in the garden together; just children, nothing more."

Count Wolfram paid little attention to his brother's explanation.

"I was, of course, aware of that," he said, quietly, and then continued, addressing Philip:

"Do you think, Chevalier, that your position as friend of the Princess, entertaining for her a friendship which might easily, under romantic conditions and by romantic natures, be exalted into another emotion, makes you the best person to intervene in a quarrel between this lady and her husband?"

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Philip's cheeks were flushed, but his voice was steady as he answered:

"If I had thought myself the best person I should not now be here, and the Princess would long ere this have been free. It is because I decided that I was not the best person to interfere that I have ridden to Sonnenburg, and have appealed to the man who has the best right to interfere, the lady's father. Though that appeal has not been very warmly received, I again, full of the sense of my own unfitness to accomplish what must be accomplished, renew it to the father of the injured lady, and yet more earnestly and pressingly to you."

For the first time since the conference had begun something like an expression of human emotion softened a little the rugged features of the Count, and the emotion seemed, evanescent though its impression was, to be one of pleasure. The Duke began to babble again, uttering vague, meaningless phrases about the difficulties of the matter, the delicacy of interference, the necessity for prudence, the advisability, above all things, of delay. When he had rambled along for a few seconds, Count Wolfram lifted up a warning hand and the flood of words abruptly ceased.

"What the Chevalier says," he began, "and the Chevalier has said it very well and does himself credit as a man of honor and a soldier, calls for action. I will not say if what the Chevalier says is true, for every one who knows anything of the history of the Illustrious O'Hagan knows that what he says must

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be true, and any one who does not has only to look in the Chevalier's face. What the Chevalier says calls for immediate action. The only question for us to consider is what form that action shall take. My niece, your daughter, is most unhappily married. I have known that for long enough; it needed no errant Irish gentleman to teach me so much, but as most of the ladies of my acquaintance are, or believe themselves to be, unhappily married, there was not in Dorothea's situation enough of novelty to justify even those who held her dear in interfering—"

He made a pause and then went on very deliberately:

"Unless she herself made some appeal for interference. That appeal she has now made in the person and through the mouth of the Chevalier O'Hagan, and that appeal should be heard and answered by you, and shall be heard and answered by me if you prove unworthy of your duty to your daughter and to yourself."

The frankest astonishment reigned on the amiable face of the Duke. His brother's decision, so wholly unlike anything he had expected, staggered him as much as it stimulated Philip. For Philip felt that in this silent iron man he had won a great ally for Dorothea's cause, while the Grand-Duke was only conscious that if Wolfram made up his mind to a thing, there was nothing for it, even for the most easy-going Grand-Duke than to abandon for a time all pleasing learned thoughts and occupations, and re-

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luctantly pull himself together for the process of doing something distasteful and objectionable.

"The question now is," said Count Wolfram, "how best to effect what must be effected. Any open act would be for the moment injudicious. I suppose, Chevalier, that any kind of representation or appeal made direct from Sonnenburg to Schlafingen would only result in increasing the discomfort of my niece's position?"

"Undoubtedly," Philip answered. "In spite of the cruel treatment of the Electoral Prince, her highness is still at present free in some degree to come and go as she pleases within the limits of the town and of the ducal gardens, but I have very little doubt that any direct demand from Sonnenburg would have the effect of constituting her an absolute prisoner in the palace. Although the Elector is inclined to act with what he believes to be kindness to his daughter-in-law, he would resent as hotly as the Electoral Prince himself any suggestion which would have the effect of making a public scandal, and showing his son and heir in an odious light to the courts of Europe."

"Of course," said Count Wolfram, thoughtfully, "if we made an appeal, and that appeal were, as you think and as I think, defiantly rejected, we should be compelled for our own dignity to threaten measures of war."

As he said these words the florid face of the Grand-Duke blanched, and it was plain that he had little

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relish for the prospect of exchanging his peaceful pursuits for the headship of his little army.

"But though," Count Wolfram continued, "I think that the resources of Sonnenburg are quite equal in case of conflict to those of Schlafingen, I feel very strongly that an appeal to arms might have the gravest and most unfortunate results. Undoubtedly, Schlafingen is more influential in the council of the German states than we are, and open action on our part would lead to complications and interventions which might end by crippling us entirely without effecting the object we had in view, without effecting anything save to intensify the unhappiness of my niece's position. Do you agree with me in this, Chevalier?"

Philip bowed.

"I take it," said Count Wolfram, "that you have yourself something to suggest?"

Philip bowed again.

"When I came here," he said, "I came not so much with the intention of urging his serene highness to attempt to effect his daughter's release by force as to be sure of his sanction of an attempt to be made in another fashion, and to insure his ready reception of the Princess when her release from Schlafingen was effected."

"Of course," the Duke interrupted, hurriedly, "I should always be pleased to afford my daughter a shelter if she really finds her married life intolerable. But would not the very effect of that shelter be to

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bring upon our heads the anger of Schlafingen and the other friendly courts, and to lead, perhaps, to our being compelled to surrender her again, in which case she would be much worse off than she is now?"

Count Wolfram shook his head.

"If once Dorothea were safe in Sonnenburg," he said, "there would be very little likelihood of any attempt being made to reclaim her. There might possibly be a formal demand, which we should meet with a formal denial, and there the matter would end. But even if it did not, there would be a wide difference between our taking up arms to defend an oppressed lady who had actually thrown herself upon our hospitality, and who was so directly of our blood, and an attempt by force of arms to take the lady from her husband's side and her husband's capital. A divorce would be arranged and all end well."

The Duke had experienced so much relief from the knowledge that he was not expected to take any active steps for the rescue of his daughter, that he was prepared to bear with something like resignation the possible consequences of an abduction to be carried out by other persons, the consequences of which seemed so little to be feared by his stalwart brother.

Count Wolfram now addressed Philip.

"I suppose," he said, "that you have not come here without some definite idea of the way in which our common purpose may be effected?"

"I came here," said Philip, gravely, "in order that

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I might do what I now propose to do for the rescue of a distressed lady, with the direct sanction of the lady's father and of that lady's uncle."

He wished as he spoke that the relationship could have been reversed, and that the strong Wolfram had been the parent whose authority it was the more important to obtain.

"I propose—" he began, and then paused. "Perhaps," he said, with no satire patent in his voice, "it would please the Duke better if he were quite free from any care or responsibility in this matter other than that of authorizing me to take any action, which I, on consultation with you, Count, may think necessary."

The Duke's face brightened up.

"I think that would be a much better plan," he said. "It is far better that, no matter how much I approve of your enterprise, I should leave its details in my brother's hands and yours, and should know nothing whatever of the way in which the business is carried out."

"All I must ask from your highness," said Philip, "is, before I leave, a formal letter duly signed, to explain that I act with your permission and concurrence, as this will convert what would be otherwise a wholly unwarrantable adventure into one duly sanctioned by the family of the injured lady."

The Duke nodded. Such a letter could scarcely compromise him even in the event of failure, and failure was not likely in anything which Count Wolfram undertook, and in which he was aided by a

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restless young adventurer in whom Count Wolfram appeared to place confidence.

"I think," said Count Wolfram, rising, "that we may now leave my brother to his studies; and you and I, Chevalier, might take a turn or two in the garden while I hear by what means you propose to effect this rescue."

Philip rose, too, saluted the Duke, and followed Count Wolfram out of the ducal presence.

As soon as he was alone the Duke heaved a weary sigh, rang the bell, ordered a bottle of Rhenish and the companionship of his librarian and curator, and did his best with such solace and company to forget the aggressive intrusion of practical politics into his tranquil life.

Count Wolfram led the way into the garden in silence, and through the garden till they had reached a secluded avenue of lime-trees at some distance from the palace.

As Count Wolfram walked up and down this alley with Philip he asked him to lay before him the plans by which he hoped to effect the rescue of the Princess. Philip told him that his idea was to recruit for this special and delicate service some old friends of his, Irish soldiers of fortune, that were, or had been, in the service of Austria, men of loyalty, courage, and integrity, who could be relied upon to undertake and to carry through such an adventure with zeal and single-heartedness. Philip did not think that the rescue could be carried out by a large number of men.

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A number of unfamiliar presences in, or near to, so relatively small a town as Schlafingen must sooner or later excite question and suspicion, and both question and suspicion would be little less than fatal to the enterprise. Count Wolfram would obviously see that all the details of the proposed abduction would have to be matured later, when Philip had enlisted his little company and when the time was at hand for making the attempt, but at present it seemed to Philip that the most feasible scheme was that the Princess should make her escape by night, accompanied only by one woman and by himself, to the place where the rest of the party would be in waiting. From that moment it was a matter of rapid riding, and, if necessary, of fierce fighting on the part of the escort. In any case of attack those immediately with the Princess were to push on, while the remainder of the party were to hold the pursuit in check as long as they had life to make resistance.

Count Wolfram listened in silence while Philip presented his scheme to him, and when Philip had done speaking, he nodded approval.

"I think," he said, "that your proposal is the best that can be made under the conditions. I should suggest that on the night fixed for the flight a large armed body should set out from Sonnenburg so as to meet your party and the Princess as soon as possible, after you have crossed the frontier of Schlafingen."

To this Philip cordially agreed, but he earnestly requested that no steps of any kind should be taken

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which implied any sort of preparation for any coming event, and that no word should be breathed to any person of the matter. He especially requested that the Count would use his influence with his brother the Duke to keep him silent on the subject. To this Count Wolfram cordially agreed and assured Philip he thought there would be little fear of the Grand-Duke talking of a topic which, as he had shown, was very distasteful to him; but he would, however, emphasize very strongly to his brother the necessity for silence.

Philip had said nothing to the Count of what he believed to be one of the strongest cards in his hand; the fact that while Count Wolfram believed the Chevalier O'Hagan to be in his company at Sonnenburg, the world in general, or at least that part of the world in general which had its residence at Schlafingen, believed on the evidence of its own eyes and ears that the Chevalier O'Hagan was in its midst.

So Philip set forth on his travels again, and, favored by fortune, found the friends he needed in Vienna and laid his plans with care and perfected them with celerity. Not many weeks, therefore, after his departure from Schlafingen, a number of Irish soldiers of fortune, high-hearted exiles, briskly adventurous, were making their way severally by different routes towards Schlafingen, and Philip was able to send by a sure hand a letter to the Chevalier O'Hagan at the Electoral Palace of Schlafingen, addressed in French, but written in Irish, that told John good tidings.

XXVII

LADY BODMOR

THE days glided by blithely enough for John in Schlafingen. The Elector liked him immensely; the Electoral Prince professed a friendship; Madame von Lutten was ever amiable; her husband had forgiven, or pretended to forgive, the prank which John had played upon him—a prank which had mightily tickled the Elector and had even, it was said, entertained the Electress in an interval between two of her naps. Prince Karl had returned to the court after a considerable absence, and John found his grim reserve far more to his liking than the stupid volubility of brother Max. John watched the Princess Dorothea, without seeming to watch, and saw that she carried herself bravely and showed no sign of impatience for news from her knight-errant. One of John's greatest pleasures was to observe the ripening friendship of excellent Mr. Banbury, for whom he had conceived a great liking, with the comely Swanhild von Eltze, and perhaps his greatest worry was the ostentatious admiration of Melusine von Ehrenberg. The Marquis de la Vigerie, who had returned to court after a considerable absence, which he explained by a

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slight illness, was pleased to banter the Chevalier on the homage he gained from the Prince's favorite. But John took the joke coldly, and la Vigerie, who seemed to have quite a respect for John's feelings, a respect with its half air of mystery that puzzled John not a little, smiled pleasantly and said no more about it.

One day Mr. Banbury had what he considered to be a great piece of news. He told John, in a tone of reverence, even of awe, that Lord Bodmor was coming to Schlafingen. John laughed his laugh of jolly ignorance; asked who the devil Lord Bodmor was, and why the devil he was coming to Schlafingen. Mr. Banbury was more than slightly shocked, but he condescended to explain. Lord Bodmor was a distinguished person, a most distinguished person, who had grown gray and great in embassies, and who was now making a tour of all the German states with a view to a report to the home government on their laws and administration.

John failed to be impressed, to Mr. Banbury's chagrin. He explained that Lord Bodmor was to be lodged at the palace; he enumerated his services to the state, lingered lovingly over his illustrious descent, pointed out that such men were the pillars of the English constitution. John only laughed in his face.

"You forget, my good Banbury, that I am an Irishman, and do not care a rap for the British constitution. And what's your old wiseacre's descent to one that comes of a race of kings, no less?"

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Mr. Banbury was pained. He wished his Irish friend were less irreconcilable, more appreciative of the majesty and beauty of the British constitution, and the British peerage. Not quite knowing what further to say, he added as an after-thought:

"A friend writes to me that he has just married a very pretty wife. He doesn't say who she is, confound him! I suppose he thought I knew."

John's eyes brightened.

"Now you are talking," he said, cheerfully. "Between ourselves, I am tired of all these German faces, save two, and yourself knows well the two I mean."

Mr. Banbury's native ruddiness deepened as it always did at any allusion to his adored Swanchild, but he said nothing, and John went on:

"They are a bit too plump and smug for me, these same German houris, so if she is as pretty as you report I shall be mighty glad to welcome your Lady Bodmor."

Yet, as it happened, he was not glad. The Bodmors came in due course—splendid stars moving majestically in unfamiliar orbits. There was, of course, a great reception given in their honor at the palace, and it was at this reception that John saw them. He was standing in the great hall, the "Hall of the Gods" as it was called from its ugly mythological paintings, and he suddenly knew from the agitation of Banbury's manner that Banbury's great man was approaching. Glancing carelessly in the direction of Banbury's adoring eyes he saw a tall,

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stately, gray-faced man of over sixty advancing with a woman on his arm, whose head for the moment was bent.

"This is the pretty wife," said John to himself, and then the woman lifted her head and he saw her and his heart stood still. The woman's eyes, wandering idly over the assembly, suddenly saw John's rigid face, suddenly met John's fixed stare. For a moment her eyes widened, for a moment her cheeks grew red, for a moment she made as if she would quit her companion's arm; then she seemed to shrink a little nearer to her companion's side, and looking straight before her passed John by and passed out of sight into the room beyond.

Banbury came bustling up to John presently, where John stood apart leaning against the pedestal of a statue and apparently lost in thought.

"Well," he said briskly, "did you see Lady Bodmor? She is pretty, is she not?"

"She is pretty," John answered, mechanically, and then said no more, but Banbury was full of matter, and inclined to be apologetic.

"Curious," he said, "that when I spoke to you about the Bodmors coming I should not have known who the lady was."

"And who is she?" John asked, with a desperate effort to appear indifferent. Banbury noted the indifference and not the desperate effort.

"Why," he said, somewhat awkwardly, "Lady Bodmor was a daughter of Lord Oglethorpe, and she

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was to have married Tom Gunn of Langton, whom your late brother—" he was patently embarrassed and began to stammer a little. "I always thought he did a very good thing myself in doing what he did."

John smiled somewhat wistfully upon him.

"Thank you," he said. "I must take care to avoid her notice."

"You can't do that," answered Banbury, "for she has already noticed you. What is there in you Irishmen that makes women take such a fancy to you. When she asked who you were I mentioned your name, and then she instantly asked me to present you to her. By George! you are the only man she seems to take the least interest in since she came here."

John followed Banbury with a smiling face through the throng, but the heart in his body seemed stone-cold. He moved through the brilliant assemblage as a man might move through impalpable shadows, conscious of nothing but his goal. Presently they were on the edge of a little cluster of eager gentlemen, doing the gallant to a seated lady; presently they had penetrated the cluster, and Banbury, very punctilious was decorously presenting the Chevalier O'Hagan to a dainty young lady with red hair and a pale face, who seemed to be holding her own very briskly against the brisk gallantry of the Electoral court.

John gazed at the red girl-wife with thundering pulses, and the red girl-wife gazed at him with a queer smile that had fright in it, and delight in it, and something of fear, and something of a girlish mirth.

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She rose as Banbury finished his elaborate presentation and as John bowed.

"I count myself happy to meet you, Chevalier," she said, in her little, clear, quiet voice, the sound of which thawed John's frozen heart and gave him back a gift of grace. With an easy gesture of authority that seemed strangely unfamiliar in her, she dismissed her little momentary court, that dissolved regretfully into the general mass, patently resentful of John. Banbury himself evaporated, having honorably accomplished one duty in pleasing Lady Bodmor, and desirous of fulfilling other duties in pleasing her husband. John and the red-haired pale-faced girl stood for a few seconds that seemed æons alone in a multitude. Then Lady Bodmor spoke.

"Will you give me your arm, Chevalier, to the terrace. 'Tis as hot as hot here, and I hunger for a whiff of clean air."

John bowed silently and armed the girl through the press into the open air, grimly trying to ask himself what he thought of this catastrophe, and grimly acknowledging that he was unable to answer the question.

Outside on the cool terrace the summer air was pleasant, with a melancholy in it that John, for a wonder, welcomed, for it chimed with his troubled spirit. There were but few couples on the wide space with its urns and balusters. Below them, where the white steps dived into blackness, the great gardens stretched, waves of varying dimness into what seemed

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immensity. When John and his companion halted and peered into the gloom they might very well have been alone in the world.

The woman spoke first.

"It is very strange to meet you here. I heard that you were dead."

John answered her calmly.

"Here is some error. For whom do you take me?"

"Unkind," the woman said, and looked steadily at him. He could see her face very clearly—pale, and pretty and eager—in the lamp-light. "Unkind. Do you think I could forget John O'Hagan?"

"John O'Hagan died in Greece. You said that you knew that."

The woman smiled a little wistfully at his insistence.

"I said that I heard as much. Why do you play with me? Would you have me believe that you are a ghost?"

"I am Philip O'Hagan. John and I were twin brothers and resembled each other very strangely."

She stared, her eyes full of wonder, full of fear, into his grave face.

"Very strangely indeed. I did not think such a miracle possible. Are you making sport of me?"

"Such resemblances are rare, but not impossible. If you had ever seen us together you would have known one from the other. The difficulty was to know which was which with only one on hand."

"Well," the girl said, sadly, "your brother was very kind to me once. I shall hold his memory dear,"

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She was silent. He was silent too, thinking wild thoughts. Through the windows of the palace the strings of the violin sent the music of a plaintive air thrilling into the summer night. It was the music of an air that she and John had heard together on that night in Vienna, when she had broken down and told him her woes, and he had mentally vowed to set her free from the satyr of Langton. It was no marvel that the Elector's band should play that very air in that very hour. The girl had asked for it, through Banbury, when she first was aware of John's presence, meaning merely to harmonize their strange meeting, and little thinking of the use to which she was to put it.

The music came wailing and straining out into the darkness, throbbing with passion, aching with sadness, playing on the heart-strings of those two—its hearers—as the bows played on the strings of the fiddles within. For the man, as for the woman, enveloped in the rapture and agony of sweet sound, time had fallen back, and the shrouding gloom glowed like a place of lights, trembled with the movement of rich presences that paid no heed to the pair in the curtained window—the Irish soldier of fortune and the pale English girl martyred by a fear too fierce for tears.

In the darkness the woman spoke, but her voice was the voice of the girl in that shining chamber, and it was so that her companion heard it.

“Do you remember the last time we heard that

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music?" she whispered, controlling the eagerness of her voice, lowering her lids to hide the eagerness in her eyes. The man dropped his head into his hands.

"Indeed, I do," he answered, passionately, and as he spoke the girl drew herself up and touched him on the shoulder triumphantly with her fan. "You are John O'Hagan!" she cried; "you are John O'Hagan! you are John O'Hagan! I was sure of it from the first, and now I defy you to deny me."

John looked her squarely in the face. He had betrayed himself and could not undo it.

"I am John O'Hagan," he said.

Instantly she caught his hands and held them tightly.

"Dear friend, brave friend," she murmured, "why did you deny me? Did you think I could be your enemy?"

"Devil a bit," John answered, gripping her clinging fingers fondly. "But you must think me Philip O'Hagan still, for all that, and forget all about poor blundering John that is supposed to be lying out of the world's way at last in Greece yonder. It is not for my own sake I am doing this, it's for a woman's."

She tried now to pull her hands free of his clasp and her face lowered a little.

"Always the squire of dames," she said, sourly. "Who is your lady-love?"

John guessed her thoughts and smiled grimly, while he kept her fingers prisoner.

"My dear," he said, tenderly, "the lady I speak of

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is a fair lady and a sweet lady, but she is no lady-love of mine, and I should have said that I serve her for the sake of brother Philip. I think you might guess that I have only had one real lady-love in my life, and she, as I learn to-night, is married."

"You never asked me to marry you. You know how I would have answered you."

"I know nothing of the kind," he said, stoutly. "Why should I ask you to marry me that was traipsing over Europe huckstering my pounds and inches. A kind thing to a child like you, the offer of such a husband."

"Yet I think you showed that you could serve me well," she said. "Was it for my sake that you—"

She hesitated, as if unwilling to continue. He answered her unspoken words.

"It was. If I loved you too well to dream of asking for you, I loved you too well to let you suffer that sorrow. I have done mad things and bad things in my life, plenty of them, but I shall never think it was other than sane and good to save you from him."

Her hands pressed his passionately, her eyes were eloquent of much.

"You are a brave gentleman and you saved me from shame. If I had seen you thereafter, I should have done the asking."

"Lady," said John, stoutly, "I think you are an angel, but it is not good for those that are merely mortal to have overmuch speech with angels."

He bowed and gave her his arm and led her back

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into the Hall of Roses, where many gallants made eagerly for the English girl. As John left her to her swelling court he whispered, "Keep my secret," and she nodded and smiled at him with wet eyes.

A day or two later the excellent Humperdienster, now some time returned from Paris, sent a message to the Chevalier O'Hagan that he had some fine wine which he should like him to taste. John hastened to the "Three Kings," tasted and praised the wine, and incidentally was made the recipient of a letter addressed in French to the Chevalier O'Hagan at the Electoral Palace, but, as to its contents, written in the Irish tongue and character. Philip told John that he was in concealment on the other side of the river, that all was going well, and asking him to arrange a meeting between him and the Princess on the day following receipt of the letter. There was a deserted summer-house in a part of the gardens overlooking the river which he would visit by way of the water on a certain hour. John returned to the palace with a grave face and managed to get a few private words with Dorothea.

XXVIII

THE SUMMER-HOUSE BY THE RIVER

THE Ehrenberg girl was in a rage. Also, she was in pain. For her patent inclination towards John had run counter to Madame von Lutten's humor, and Madame von Lutten had chosen that morning to make her niece aware of her displeasure. From words she had come to cuffs, and the cuffs grew to a sound drubbing which the Ehrenberg could not effectually resist. Madame von Lutten in a fury was far stronger than she, so that when the spell of strokes was over poor, whimpering Melusine was very glad to slink out of the palace and dive into the depths of the garden to cool her smarting cheeks and calm her fluttered spirits. Madame von Lutten could slap with a vicious twang and the girl's cheeks were resentfully tender. So she drifted sniffing towards the more distant parts of the gardens, that she might be alone with her sense of injury.

Wandering along aimlessly, and cursing her too parental aunt, she found herself, after a little while, in a part of the princely gardens with which she was quite unfamiliar. She had passed, in fact, beyond the famous pleasure-grounds into a wilder, unculti-

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vated region which was thickly grown with trees and tufted with rough grass and seemed like a strip of wilderness left specially by the side of so much elaborate garden-work to emphasize its refinement, as your rough olive swimming in pickle lends a zest to delicate drinking of fine vintages. There was no such purpose in the fact. Neither the Elector nor the Elector's gardener was of that flight in the devising of contrast. The reason was simpler and uglier.

The Ehrenberg had heard something of the story, dimly, unheedingly, from whisper and hint and gossip; dimly, unheedingly, because her simple mind felt little interest in anything that did not concern herself. But what she remembered of a court story would have been enough to have turned her steps in another direction had she realized whither she was tending. Years ago, when the old Elector was alive and the present Elector was a young man, the third of a family of brawling brothers, something happened in that little coppice that stood so near to the river. There was a gardener's daughter that the then Electoral Prince found desirable, and the pair used to meet, so Melusine now recalled, in a summer-house. And as her memory took that jog, she, looking about her, saw ahead, through the trees, a building, ramshackle and dilapidated, but still standing, that must be the very tryst. At the sight of it the Ehrenberg shivered and felt chilly in spite of the warm air.

The gardener's girl, it seemed, had tempted more than one of the princely brothers. The second son

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had wooed and not in vain, for the girl's loyalty to the reigning house was unquestionable and generous. For a while the brothers were unaware of her complaisance and their rivalry, till one day suspicion came, and brother spied on brother and one found the other with the fair in the summer-house, and there was a scuffle among the trees and over the grass this way and that, with a frightened woman trying to scream and unable to scream on account of the wound in her throat. Hours after, some gardeners found the dead body of the Electoral Prince lying on its face with its hands clutching at the grasses, and the dead body of the girl was bobbing about in the river hard by.

Only one person knew what had happened, and that was the third brother, he that was now the Elector. He had spied upon his spying brother; he had tracked him cautiously to the coppice and the summer-house by the river; hiding behind a hedge and thinking to see sport, he had been a frozen witness of the bloody business. He had kept very still, fearing to be killed, too, if he made his presence known. The grim story ran on that later, trembling, he told his father, and that the fierce old Elector believed him, and that there was an awful scene between the father and the son who had become his heir by murder. It ended in the criminal leaving the principality and getting himself killed in foreign service—that was the condition upon which he was spared trial and public punishment—and thus it came about that through a gardener's

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girl the third of three princely brothers came to be Elector of Schlafingen.

All this Melusine recalled feverishly as she stood trembling within the wicked wood. From the day of that dismal crime the place had been unchanged, untouched, left to grow wild; the summer-house abandoned to decay, blistering in the summer suns and wilting under the winter rains untended. The servants of the palace gave the place the cold shoulder, believed that the ghosts of murdered prince and murdered peasant haunted its loneliness. The Ehrenberg shuddered and trembled when she guessed where she was, and would have rested awhile willingly to stay the trembling in her knees. But bench or seat of any kind there was none, so she turned to depart from the place as quickly as she could. A yew-tree hedge, old and broken and uncared for, divided this slip of banned and desecrated land from the last fringe of the formal garden. It was through a gap in this hedge, which had many gaps in its vallation, that the girl had passed into the dreary place, the abomination of desolation of the princely house of Schlafingen. It was through that hedge that more than half a century earlier the young Prince had peeped upon a brother slaying a brother. The girl was glad to quit the accursed ground, but as she got within the pale of the parkland again she turned involuntarily to look upon the place of blood. And then with a horror so great that it stayed her from screaming, much as she wanted to scream, and stayed her from fainting,

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much as she wanted to faint, she saw two figures emerge from the ruined summer-house, the figure of a woman and the figure of a man.

Fancy gallops faster even than vision. Had the Ehrenberg fainted then and come to herself alone, she would probably have believed to the end of her foolish existence that she had seen a man in the courtly habit of an earlier mode, accompanied by a woman in the peasant's dress of a gardener's girl, issue from the summer-house, and would have held against all argument that she had beheld the ghosts of the Electoral Prince and of his rustic paramour. But she did not faint; she only crouched on her knees behind the yew hedge, and through the interstices she saw, unseen, first, that the man and woman were no phantoms, and next, that they wore the habit of her own hour. It was only after she had realized this that she realized some more amazing truths. The woman was the wife of the Electoral Prince, Dorothea; the man was the Chevalier O'Hagan, for whose sweet sake she had tasted buffets. The Ehrenberg watched in wonder. The pair were deep in quiet speech, of which she could hear no word, and they moved well away from her through the horror-haunted trees in the direction of the river-bank. Melusine noticed that the Chevalier O'Hagan was less bravely habited than was his wont—noticed without understanding, or trying to understand, the fact. Presently the pair halted by a little clump of alders that overhung the stream, and the girl could see that the Chevalier

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O'Hagan stooped and seemed busy about the unfastening of a rope. It was plain that he was going thence by a boat that he had moored in the shallows and under the screen of the trees, though why he should act so strangely was more than poor Melusine could understand. She saw the Chevalier climb into his craft, saw him kiss the white hand of the Electoral Princess, saw him push off and disappear. Then she saw Dorothea turn and come back slowly through the trees, looking as one that thought troubled thoughts. She passed from the coppice into the gardens and was soon out of sight.

The Ehrenberg was so much amazed by what she had thus unexpectedly overseen that she quite forgot her own physical discomfort in her futile reflections upon the event. Why did the Electoral Princess and the Chevalier O'Hagan choose to meet in that uncanny place? Why, indeed, should they meet at all in secret? The bearing of the Chevalier at court towards the Princess was always one of courteous deference and respectful distance; there was nothing to show in his demeanor that he presumed upon, or even remembered, the friendship of their youthful years. The Ehrenberg knew that many men were in love with the Electoral Princess, but she had always been convinced from her observation that the Chevalier O'Hagan was not of the number. They were seldom thrown together, never more than was made imperative by the Chevalier's position at the court; the Chevalier was an assiduous squire of other dames; the

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Ehrenberg had wished as hotly as her phlegmatic nature permitted that he would play the squire to her. And now here he was meeting the Princess clandestinely in the loneliest spot in all the principality. What did it mean?—what could it mean but that they were secretly lovers, and that their well-feigned air of amiable indifference was only the jauntily worn mask of illicit passion?

The Ehrenberg was so big with her secret that she did not know how to bear herself. Her immediate vexation at the discovery that her naïve passion had an unexpected rival in the person of the Electoral Princess was not keen enough to crush her pleasing sense of importance in the possession of a state secret. She had not ardently hoped to win Philip all to herself—it was not characteristic of the Ehrenberg ardently to hope for anything; she would have been quite willing to accept a share of the affection that he seemed so ready to accord to this and that court lady. She had not resented his indifference to her; she had only regretted it, and it would have been impossible to explain to her unmoral simplicity the kindness of purpose, the kindness and the pity which had influenced John to put her by. But it did pique her a little that the Princess, who had played the prude against her so zealously in the scandal of the court minuet, should be thus flagrantly dipped in an intrigue with a gentleman so distinguished for gallantry, if not for profligacy—it would have been hard for any one to be distinguished for

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profligacy in the Electoral court—as the Chevalier O'Hagan.

Having got this great secret the girl did not know what to do with it. Her shallow, placid mind nourished no grudge against the Electoral Princess, either on account of her disdain of the Ehrenberg's position, or on account of her newly discovered mysterious understanding with the Chevalier O'Hagan. Nor did she cherish any resentment against the Irishman for having taken no advantage of her advances. Therefore, no leas of animosity puddled the candor of her apathy and prompted her to peach. If the Chevalier O'Hagan would have nothing to do with her she did not mind how many other ladies he favored, and if she felt a sly satisfaction in thinking that the seeming impeccable Princess had tripped, she was not malign in her delight. But her secret was too big for her; it was heady, like strong wine, and made her senses reel. As she picked her way through the parterres and along the winding paths of the gardens she was too busy with her thoughts of the parting she had witnessed to remember her recent mauling. Should she speak, and if so, to whom, or should she hold her tongue; and if so, for how long? After weighing such argument as she was capable of arraying on either side of any question, she decided that it would be the best thing for her to hold her peace. And having arrived definitely at that decision, it was only natural for such as she to act quite otherwise.

For one of the first persons she met on her return

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to the palace was her aunt, and Madame von Lutten, seeing an air of mystery on the slut's simple face, questioned her, and under threat of a repetition of the morning's taps wrung from her the treasured secret.

Who, then, was in a rage but Madame von Lutten? To have been so bubbled by this scum; to have been so foolishly hoodwinked by his show of indifference to the Electoral Princess. All the viperous nature of her raged to choke and sting and spit, but she kept her face rigid while she bound Melusine by great oaths, which meant little to the child, and by plentiful threats, which meant much, to breathe no syllable of what she had seen or thought she had seen. Madame von Lutten so furiously emphasized the tail-end of her injunction that silly Melusine at the end of the colloquy was almost in some doubt as to whether she had really seen what she had seen or had been dazzled by a summer dream.

The Ehrenberg packed off to her room, Madame von Lutten gave herself some hideous minutes of reflection. She had not the slightest doubt as to the truth of Melusine's story. Flaming waves of jealous hatred tossed her wicked thoughts this way and that; she was famine-ravenous for revenge. It was her loathing for Dorothea, even more than her love—as she was pleased to call it—for O'Hagan, that now tortured her. The man's genial gallantries had vexed her little, and she had given herself satisfaction for Melusine's flagrant and unappreciated devotion.

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But an intrigue with the Electoral Princess, carried on so skilfully as to deceive not merely all the court and the Electoral Prince, but to deceive her, this was more than she could bear. She brooded malignly for some evil minutes, in which, bit by bit, she formed her plan. Then she sought and gained audience of the Electoral Prince and distilled some of her poison into his spirit. He hated Dorothea, and yet was strangely, basely jealous of her; his flesh rebelled at the thought of her welcoming a lover, yet at the same time if he could prove her crime in the world's eyes he would prove it and be free, and incidentally he would contrive to take the life of the Chevalier O'Hagan. Max had always hated the Chevalier, even after his first suspicions had been lulled, dulled, and finally dissipated; and now that he found himself so egregiously fooled, the fire of his dislike mounted to his sodden brain and maddened him.

Between the bad woman and the brute man, the pair arranged a hideous little tragi-comedy. The pith of the piece was a letter that should come from Dorothea, calling the Chevalier O'Hagan to her side, and the climax was to be the discovery of the lovers at the pavilion by witnesses whose independence and whose credit could leave no doubt in the eyes of Europe of the Electoral Prince's wrongs and of the justice of his revenge. Madame von Lutten undertook to provide the letter. She had a native gift of imitating handwriting which patience and practice had elevated to an art, and which she had more than

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once found serviceable, but never so serviceable as now. She also undertook to arrange for the presence of the proper witnesses; in a word, she undertook to manage everything, and implored Prince Max to leave everything to her and to wait with seeming phlegm for the day, or rather the night, but few days and nights distant, when the tragi-comedy would be played, and Max should gain freedom and revenge in full measure.

The whimsical fates that were weaving the web of Dorothea's deliverance were pleased to take a part in the weaving of Madame von Lutten's snare, and, as if with a sense of humor, to arrange that the climax of the scheme of honor and the climax of the scheme of dishonor should coincide.

XXIX

AN UNEXPECTED MESSAGE

THE excellent Elector was giving a dinner in honor of his English guests. He did not care the toss of a copper penny for his English guests, but he knew that they were his guests, and he knew also that they were what the queer people of England called respectable, and he wished to show that Schlafingen, when it chose, could be as respectable as the rest and best of the world. But respectability is a word that is patently capable of many interpretations, and the Elector very naturally interpreted it in his own way. When he decided to exclude some of the more notorious of the ladies that enhanced the gayety of his court he considered that he had done very well. Madame von Lutten, of course, as the wife of a high official, there could be no question of excluding, but her niece, the Ehrenberg, was banned. The Elector, indeed, would not of his own wish have so banned her, but he knew that her absence was essential to the presence of Dorothea. Now, the Elector desired very eagerly the presence of Dorothea at his dinner. With such rumors of domestic infelicity as gossip may have carried to the

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ears of his English guests he had no concern. What he wished was to save appearances in their eyes and appearances would be saved by the presence of Dorothea at the same table with the Electoral Prince.

So the Elector sent for his daughter-in-law and made his appeal to her, and after a little hesitation she consented, to his great satisfaction. The only condition she made was that she should be permitted to retire early, and this permission the Elector, delighted to gain his point so easily, very readily accorded.

Dorothea might not have consented so readily were it not for one thing. The night of the Elector's dinner was also the night fixed for her flight to her father's land. Everything had been arranged on the evening when she had seen Philip in the old summer-house on the river-bank. Her presence at the Elector's table, her association with his guests, her decorous attitude of grave amiability towards the Electoral Prince, would serve well to cloak her real purpose and help to insure her from interruption after she retired from the Elector's presence. She had no thought that her enemies suspected her; she did not dream that she was watched, plotted against; she was wholly joyous in her immediate prospect of escape.

The party was to be a small one. The guests were, after the English Bodmor, Graf von Lutten and his wife, the Marquis de la Vigerie and Mr. Banbury, for their official positions, the Chevalier O'Hagan, because it had been explained to the Elector by Madame

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von Lutten that Lady Bodmor seemed to have a regard for the Irishman. Madame von Lutten's real reason for wishing the Chevalier O'Hagan to be present she kept to herself. The Elector and the Electress, the Electoral Prince and Princess, Prince Karl, and four of the Electress's most distinguished ladies brought up the party to sixteen persons.

Lord Bodmor and Mr. Banbury have both left accounts of the banquet—the one in his memoirs, the other in his diary. Both, as is natural, regard the banquet but as the insignificant prologue to the amazing events that succeeded it, but both agree in bearing testimony that no sense of any impending calamity marked the course of the feast. All seems to have been properly solemn, properly decorous, properly dull. The Elector ate and drank hugely, after his habit, and played the gallant to the English girl in a manner which suggested a personage from Versailles painted with a large brush by an unsteady hand. The Electress soon began to doze, without, however, by doing so, discomposing the discreet English nobleman, who continued his quiet conversation to the nodding old image as if she were the sprightliest listener in the world. Prince Max said little, but drank much, and watched with an unpleasant smile alternately the face of Dorothea, as she talked with his brother Karl, and the face of the Chevalier O'Hagan, who was doing his best, and doing it very well, to entertain the austere lady-in-waiting allotted to him. La Vigerie was brilliant, epigrammatic,

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gallant, bringing the bright air of France into the heavy, splendid chamber. Banbury was quiet, dry, diplomatic; inwardly depressed by the absence of his angel, Swanhild; outwardly attentive to his lady-in-waiting, whom he treated somewhat as if she were the representative of some state on whom he was urging the advisability of concluding a treaty. Von Lutten was pompous, and ostentatiously the statesman; his lady wife was mightily mirthful, with much play of fan, much play of feature, much play of white, jewelled fingers. All the company, of course, spoke in French.

The dinner came to an end at last, and at the end of it the Electress was flagrantly asleep, and of those that were strangers there only la Vigerie seemed serenely unweary of the feast. The two Englishmen made strenuous efforts to conceal their boredom; the Englishwoman found the Elector's florid compliments offensive. As for John, knowing what he knew of that night's duty, he found it hard to maintain his cheer.

After dinner the company adjourned to an adjoining room—the Hall of Roses, so called from a French painter's decorations of the walls and ceiling—where they were supposed to sip coffee and listen to music and talk as they pleased. Here Dorothea gravely asked the Elector's permission to retire, on the plea of fatigue, and having received the expected answer, went to the sofa where the Electress snored with her faithful four around her. Dorothea paused for a

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moment as she looked upon the poor, old, painted, dyed, fat, phlegmatic sleeper, and a thousand melancholy, ironic thoughts possessed her. Here, before her, mocking her in its corpulent somnolence, was the effigy of what she herself should become if she were properly prepared to live the regulated conventional life of the typical wife of a typical Electoral Prince. Such a one was expected to shut her eyes to her husband's infidelities, brutalities, even cruelties; such a one was expected to find her consolation in over-eating, over-drinking, over-sleeping; such a one was expected to take the world with torpid senses, to be scarcely living while still alive. A little shiver rippled over Dorothea as she thought that she was escaping not, indeed, from such a fate, but from all the agonies, humiliations, despairs that must result from her tireless struggles against such a fate.

To her mind's eye came the vision of her father's park and of the child who played there, and at the thought that under cover of this very night she was to ride thither and find peace, there seemed to be a ringing of joy-bells in her ears and in her heart. Yet she felt a little touched, too, in taking farewell of the foolish old woman who, in her way, had always tried to be kind to her and had always so pathetically counselled her to take things as they were, and to make the best of her destiny. "Good-night," she murmured, and a lady-in-waiting touched the Electress on the arm and she recovered consciousness enough to learn that her daughter-in-law was going.

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"Good-night, my dear," she said, sleepily, "pleasant dreams and pleasant waking," and having uttered this benediction she lapsed into heavier sleep again. Dorothea included the company in a graceful salutation, that all seemed to share equally, and passed to her sedan and the pavilion where Swanhild was awaiting her.

After the departure of the Electoral Princess, wine was called for by the Elector, and Max set to drinking at a great rate, an example that no one followed except the Elector himself. The two Englishmen were sober spirits, la Vigerie had taken all the wine he cared for at the meal, von Lutten drank little because wine did not agree with him, Prince Karl drank little because his brother drank much, and as for John O'Hagan, he was too happy in a corner talking with Lady Bodmor to need any other exhilaration.

Madame von Lutten had left the room for a while unheeded, but she had soon returned, and stood by a window that gave on to the terrace, watching O'Hagan intently. Presently a page came into the room and went to the Chevalier O'Hagan where he sat talking, handed him a little letter, and disappeared. John asked his companion's permission to read the letter, and having instantly obtained it, opened the note and read. It contained but a single sentence, which ran: "Come to me at the pavilion by midnight," and it was signed, "Dorothea." John thrust the letter into a pocket, explained to the Englishwoman that it had reference to his official duties, and resumed his con-

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versation, for it was still some time to midnight. He was wondering what the Princess wanted of him, wondering if anything had miscarried that she should thus suddenly change the plans. He was very happily unhappy sitting there talking to the woman whom he loved so well with a love that had nothing in common with the light amours that had spangled his life with their tinsel. But he could not deny such a summons as had thus unexpectedly come to him, and he sighed a little as he got him ready to obey it.

“Why do you sigh?” Lady Bodmor asked, gently. She held a very tender feeling of friendship towards this light-hearted adventurer who had done so much for her sake. There was nothing in her thoughts of him that she would not have told to her husband if she had been free to reveal the secret of John’s identity. She was perfectly loyal to the man she had married, to the man who seemed a hero in contrast to the man she might have married, but her loyalty did not prevent her from finding John O’Hagan a blithe piece of chivalry. If he were something of a libertine he had never showed aught of that in his way with her in the days when they first made friends, and he never showed aught of it now, although he was as debonair and merry as you please. “Why do you sigh?” she asked.

“I sigh,” said John, gravely, “because duty compels me to go when it would be my pleasure and my pride to remain by your side. It is very good to see you again and I do not deserve such fair fortune.”

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"Indeed, you do," she interrupted him, quickly.

John smiled a little sadly at her vehemence.

"If you say so I must needs try to believe it," he acquiesced. "But, any way, I grudge losing the least chance of your company, for while I am with you I feel a great many fine thoughts that somehow never seem to come to me at other times, worse luck."

"You speak as if we were never going to meet again," she protested.

"Shall we?" he asked, and his voice was sad in spite of his effort to keep it merry. "You will be going away soon from this silly place, and you live in England, which is no place for me."

"It might be," she pleaded. "My husband has much influence. It might be made safe for you to return when you have resumed your own name."

John shook his head.

"My dear," he said, "I can play no part in your life after this. My way is the way of the camp and the barrack, and the high prize of life is out of my reach. But I want you to do something for me?"

"What is it?" she questioned, tremulous. John touched her fan, from whose ring a knot of ribbon dangled.

"May I have this bit of ribbon?" he asked, "to keep with me always as a token of your friendship, as a talisman to remind me of this night."

She untied the ribbon briskly, pulled it free from the ring of the fan, and twirled it up small with her

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fingers. Without a word she placed it in his palm and John saw that her eyes were shining with tears.

His hand closed quickly upon the gift and he thrust it into the bosom of his coat.

"It is idle to regret the past," he said, speaking slowly, with an unfamiliar gravity, "except in so far as it may affect the future, and God only knows what my future is likely to prove. But I know what my past would have been like if I had met with a woman like—" he paused for a moment and then went on—"like a woman I know, and had been able to woo her and win her." His old bright manner returned to save the situation. "Faith, the Englishmen have all the luck," he said, and glanced at that part of the room where the English nobleman was gravely conversing with an Elector somewhat too fuddled to comprehend him. And as he spoke he rose to take his leave.

A woman watching the room from the terrace outside saw his action and understood it. Instantly she turned, and, hastening quietly along its length, she descended the steps into the garden. At the foot of the steps she found a man waiting. "Come," she commanded, in a low voice, and the pair moved along side alleys through the darkness of the park in the direction of the pavilion.

John's action had other watchers in the room. The Electoral Prince in a corner, sulkily playing cards with von Lutten, sulkily drinking, saw John rise, and the frown on his face deepened. Monsieur de la Vigerie saw John rise, and his face lightened, as he made his

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way across the room to take his place by the English girl's side.

"Good-bye," John said, "and God bless you, little darling. I should never make so fine a fellow as Philip, not if I lived for a thousand years, which is far from likely, but I promise you this, that I shall try to be a better man to the end of my life—end come long, end come short."

She said nothing, but she was smiling at him very kindly with bright eyes. And at that moment la Vigerie joined them. John made the girl a reverence and made his way carelessly from group to group till he reached the open window. It was not etiquette to quit without permission accorded the Electoral presence, but John did not stick at such trifles. If any question arose he could plead his official duties and his unwillingness to disturb the Elector in his conversation. Gradually he reached the open window and stood looking into the night. A moment later, when he thought that no one was looking, he slipped out on to the terrace. Only Prince Max, watching furtively over his cards, saw him depart.

XXX

THE WATCHERS IN THE DARK

DARKNESS seemed to dwell like a dreamless sleep in the pavilion of the Princess Dorothea. Though the moonlight's clear cheerfulness flushed every solemn avenue, floated over the worn steps of the terrace, and flung its splendor upon the fantastic architecture of the sad lady's retreat, it illuminated no sign of life in the quaint dwelling-place, or in the sombre boscages that engirdled it. Far away, beyond the terrace, beyond the smooth lawns, beyond the smiling parterres, the dim bulk of the palace loomed, with slits of light in the hulk, where windows confessed to candles and suggested mirth within. But no hint of illumination, of human occupation, showed through the closely lidded windows of the pavilion, and the stillness of the circling trees seemed as deep, as mysterious, as the silence and quiet of the Princess's resting-place. Yet there were human beings behind the heavy curtains of the pavilion, busy on their own business of life and death; and there were human beings cooped in the obscurity of the trees, busy on their own business of espiial and of hate.

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The watched had no thought of the watchers; the watchers' only thought was of the watched.

A footstep jarred the oppressive silence of the night, and one of those that listened and lingered in the thicket tingled with expectation. Out of the shadow, into the clear space of the moonlit lawn, a man emerged. He came from an unexpected quarter, but there were many ways of reaching the pavilion. He moved across the gilded grasses at a steady pace, passing as he did so, all unawares, the woman and the man that lurked in ambush, to whom his face was very clear as he passed. Then the clearness of face and figure was swallowed up in darkness as he came to a halt in the black shadow of the palace and clapped his open hands together sharply once and twice and thrice. A line of light appeared at one of the darkened casemates; a drawn curtain and a partly opened window gave a glimpse of a woman's form, gave a hint of a woman's voice.

"Philip?" the woman's voice said, interrogatively, and yet with a confidence in it that answered the question even as it was put, and without waiting for the reaffirming "Ay" that came from the figure below huddled in the obscurity. "Wait a moment," came the whisper from above, "and I will open the door."

The watchers held their breaths where they lay concealed, while the window darkened again and the bulk of the pavilion resumed its gloom; held their breaths while the man mounted the steps, and the

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dark door opened and shut again. Then they glided from their retreat and faced each other in the moonlight—a woman and a man.

In the bright moonlight the face of the woman showed livid; so twisted with hate and rage that any one so beholding her for the first time would have been forced to deny that she had any claims to beauty. Indeed, in that moment Madame von Lutten looked more like a fury than a human being, so racked and swayed was she by furious emotions. The ruffianly jovial face of the man, contused by much drinking and scarred by much fighting, expressed no more than an indifferent, cynical amusement. He had shaped his lips to a pantomime of whistling and his lewd mind was busy with lewd thoughts.

Madame von Lutten turned fiercely upon him.

“You saw who that was?”

The man nodded and grinned. Madame von Lutten stamped her foot in anger.

“Who was it then?” she asked, angrily. The man lifted his heavy eyelids a little in a steady stare at her raging face. Then he saw that she wanted an answer, and gave her the answer, slowly.

“The Irishman, the Chevalier Philip O’Hagan.”

Madame von Lutten came very close to her companion.

“You are quite sure?” she asked, insistently.

The man gave a short laugh, and his flushed face seemed for a moment to wear a ruddier purple.

“I am quite sure,” he answered, dryly. “I am not

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likely to mistake the features of the Chevalier O'Hagan.

Madame von Lutten looked at him curiously. She had chosen Gustav Brandt as her accomplice, as her instrument, from his office and from what she knew of his character; but there was a special reason why she had guessed that he would be a ready weapon. She had not forgotten his wish to be Captain of the Palace Guard.

"You do not love him?" she questioned, and the man nodded and answered, somewhat thickly:

"I do not love him."

"So much the better," said Madame von Lutten. "Go to the Prince's guard-room; choose four reliable, silent, obedient fellows, and come back here as quickly as you can. When you see a man coming out of the pavilion cut him down."

Again the man went through the pantomime of whistling, and it would have diverted any one less earnest than Madame von Lutten to see the bloated face pursed up into that silent mimicry of sound.

"Gently, gently," he protested. "The Irishman is my superior officer; he stands high at court. I have no wise right for this business."

Madame von Lutten's pale face raved at him, startling him with its rage.

"You fool," she said, "do you think I do not know what I am about?" and as she spoke she plucked a folded paper from the bosom of her dress and thrust

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it under the nose of the astonished ruffian. He picked the paper from her fingers gingerly.

"What's this?" he said, and then as he read the superscription in the clear moonlight his habitual trick of silent whistling relaxed for an instant into a slender escape of breath. For the paper was addressed to him by name in an unexpected, if familiar, handwriting. While he stared at the paper, Madame von Lutten stamped her foot again.

"Read!" she protested, impatiently, and opening the paper her companion read aloud in a low voice the brief contents of the message. Laconically, it commanded Gustav Brandt to place himself for that night under the orders of Madame von Lutten, and to obey her in all things, even as he would obey his sovereign prince, under promise of high reward. The curt missive was signed with the name of Prince Max, the Electoral Prince, and Brandt knew in an instant that the writing and the signature were the Prince's own and no forgery.

Brandt twisted the paper slowly in his fingers, while he eyed Madame von Lutten curiously.

"Lady," he said, slowly, "I have always had a pretty taste for the fair, and ever since I came to Schlafingen I have heartily admired you."

Madame von Lutten pressed her lips together and frowned. "You are very good," she said, coldly. Brandt laughed coarsely.

"Oh, I knew from the first," he said, "that you were something out of my reach! The poor Swedish

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adventurer must market for cheaper fruit. But it seems that I have risen in the world in the last few minutes, and it seems also that I can render you a very pretty service. Well, then, service for service. Let me have some of your smiles, some of your kisses."

Comprehensive as were the inclinations of Madame von Lutten, they had not included this drunken bully in their number. But the woman was hard set for revenge and unwilling to haggle over the cost. She swallowed her distaste and forced herself to smile.

"When you have done your work," she said, amiably, "you shall not find me ungrateful."

The stubborn Swede shook his head.

"As a gentleman of adventure, madame," he said, with an aim at gallantry that sat very odiously upon him, "I have ever believed in a payment in advance."

He came very near to her, grinning into her face, and the woman recoiled.

"By-and-by," she cried; "by-and-by. Our business now is to trap our man."

Brandt laughed thickly.

"He is good for an hour," he asserted. "I must at least have a kiss." He caught Madame von Lutten by her unwilling hands, he drew her reluctantly into the deep of the shadow; he kissed her fiercely on the lips. She was his prize, his triumph, his brevet as a man of mode.

A little later the woman was hurrying through familiar by-paths to the palace, and the man with

XXXI

THE FURY AT THE FEAST

MONSIEUR THE MARQUIS DE LA VIGERIE found that he made little progress with his purpose of winning the heart of the Englishwoman. He was witty, impassioned, delicately melancholy, brimmed with amorous hints all to no purpose. He might as well, for any gain his passion made, have been talking to the stolid Englishman who owned her. She seemed dull to his suggestions, indifferent to his wit; he could almost detect in her a desire for sleep—what a tragedy! Yet he could swear that a little while before she had seemed blithe enough when she was talking to the Irishman. What was there in that damned O'Hagan which made women care for him? A merry devil enough, and certainly a lord of the small-sword, but still with no approach to the Versailles manner, and no such resplendent reputation for the breaking of hearts as he—la Vigerie—carried. It was incomprehensible, it was also ridiculous; it ought to have been impossible.

La Vigerie found that making conversation with Lady Bodmor was a difficult business. He tried bright reminiscences, he risked gilded improprieties,

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he whispered possibilities of eternal devotion—all pitifully to no purpose. He might as well have been talking to a mummy. If ever he were appointed ambassador to St. James's—his daily dream of fame—he was scarcely likely to find the triumphs he hoped for if there were many fair women of the kind of the impassive creature by his side. But while he thought these dispiriting thoughts he chatted gallantly, carrying himself as gayly as if an hour of assignation were at hand, and the woman answered at random, played listlessly with her fan, and tried not to think too much of a little strip of ribbon that had once depended from its ring.

It was plain that the party had lasted long enough. The Elector was flushing very ruddy with his cups as he drank and tried to understand, or seem to understand, the harangues of his companion from respectable England. The Electress slept steadily, with her four watchwomen about her like the posts of a human bed. Prince Max, in his corner, waxed sullenly intemperate over the gold which his opponent was raking to his side of the table, and persistently plied the bottle, which von Lutten eschewed. Banbury and Prince Karl were in the thick of a sporting talk, and Banbury was trying to give his highness some dim idea of the superlative delights of fox-hunting, of the noble thirst it engendered, and of the noble English ale that alone of all drinks in the world was really worthy to quench that thirst.

No one noticed, or seemed to notice, that two of the

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original company had flitted from the scene. Everyone was hoping that the Elector would soon give the signal for dispersal. The Elector himself, most fervent of these hoppers, was wondering when he might decently interrupt his guest's lucid disquisition upon the British constitution with suggestion of candle, nightcap, and bed.

Suddenly, hurriedly, one of the two missing persons reappeared within the room. It was Madame von Lutten, who entered swiftly from the terrace, her face a flame of rage. She swooped upon the table where Prince Max sat with her husband; she thrust her fierce face between theirs; she spoke rapidly some words with the vehemence of a fury. Instantly, Prince Max sprang to his feet, shaking the little table so that gold and cards scattered and squandered themselves, rattling and flapping, upon the floor. Instantly, von Lutten, rising with his Prince, put out a deprecating hand as if entreating patience, as if imploring self-restraint. Instantly, all eyes—save only those sleep-lidded eyes of the Electress—were turned towards the Prince and his companions, and the Elector, startled from his growing torpor by the clink of falling coins, found himself confronted by the lowering visage of his heir.

"What is the matter?" the Elector asked, angrily, vexed at the interruption. He was intent to say more, but the son gave him no time. He had been drinking hard to stiffen himself for the business, and, over-drinking, was over-playing his part.

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"Matter!" he shouted; "matter! That damned rascal O'Hagan is now at the pavilion and in the arms of my wife."

Every one was standing now, save only the nodding Electress; every one was silent. Max, lashing his anger, snatched at Madame von Lutten's wrist and dragged her forward. "Say what you saw," he commanded, hoarsely; "say what you saw."

Madame von Lutten gasped for breath and seemed to speak with difficulty, but there was a kind of gladness in the tone of her voice.

"I was feeling faint and strayed into the garden for air. Unconsciously I drew near to the pavilion. There I saw the Chevalier O'Hagan arrive, there I saw the Princess greet him, there I saw him enter."

As she spoke, she turned and went out into the night again. A great stillness reigned over those that had heard her—all standing as if they had been stiffened into stone by this hideous interruption of an evening's mirth, all save Prince Max.

"Sire," he cried, "I claim your aid in my shame. Help me to my revenge. Come with me. Let us snare the guilty pair and deal them justice."

He drew his sword as he spoke and sprang through the open window on to the terrace; then ran fast to where the steps led to the park. Prince Karl was on his heels in an instant.

The Elector turned to von Lutten.

"Summon the guard," he commanded, "and follow quickly." Then with an unexpected vigor he,

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too, ran along the terrace in pursuit of his furious son. La Vigerie, my Lord Bodmor and Banbury looked at one another in a second of indecision. Then Banbury blurted out, regardless of diplomacy, "I think we had better see fair in this business," and showed them an example of agility in skipping through the window and giving chase, an example which they were quick to follow.

For a moment Lady Bodmor stood still where she had risen and looked about her, her senses still dizzy with the shock. Over yonder, under her canopy, the Electress still slumbered, untroubled by the disturbance, while her gaunt ladies stood erect about her and wrung their hands, whispering their fears. Then, with a sudden resolve, she gathered up her skirts and ran out into the night, pursuing the flying men. She was young, she was supple, she was lithe of limb, and she raced over the grass like Diana. She heard footsteps behind her, and glancing back saw that another woman was behind her running in the same direction, but not so swiftly. She gave her, whoever she was, no further heed, and quickly outstripped her. The hurrying group of men were not by this time very much ahead, for Prince Karl had caught up with his brother and detained him forcibly until the Elector came up with them, panting and angry. The Elector insisted on their proceeding together quietly to the pavilion to deal in dignified manner with the injured honor of the family, and quietly they were proceeding when a sudden noise of clashing swords and shouting

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voices made them take to running again with all speed.

The Ehrenberg girl, tarnished fairy exiled from the feast, had crept from her room in the quiet of the night, meaning to peep through the open windows of the Hall of Roses upon the company and get a glimpse of her adored O'Hagan. She was afraid to venture on the terrace, lest she should be seen and earn a scolding from her aunt, so she drifted into the gardens and looked longingly at the lighted windows of the Schloss. But she could see nothing of the inmates of the room from the gardens, and she was making up her mind to creep warily up the steps to the terrace, and approach the window stealthily, when her intention was abruptly interrupted. From where she stood she saw a woman glide quietly out of the Hall of Roses and stand for a moment on the terrace in the darkness. From the glimpse that the Ehrenberg got of the woman she felt sure that it was Madame von Lutten. Now she saw Madame von Lutten move rapidly along the terrace and descend the steps into the gardens of the park, where a man awaited her. Cowering behind a bush, Melusine saw her and her companion pass rapidly out of sight in the direction of the pavilion. The Ehrenberg lay for what seemed to her a long time in her form, and then thinking the coast clear was about to emerge and escape when she beheld another figure flit from the distant Hall of Roses. This time it was the figure of a man, and undoubtedly the man was her addled

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heart's hero, the Chevalier O'Hagan. He, too, made off in the direction of the pavilion, though by a different path from that followed by Madame von Lutten and her squire. Melusine's simple brains were puzzled by these unexpected events, and she squatted on the grass, trying to think them out, for quite a little while. Perhaps she had been half an hour in all in the gardens. Once again she had made up her slow mind to move towards bedroom and bed, when, once again, the figure of her aunt appeared on the lawn, not very far from her retreat, hastening as it seemed towards the palace. The crouching girl saw her mount the steps, saw her enter the Hall of Roses, saw her almost immediately emerge again and retrace at a run her earlier pilgrimage. Then, as the girl huddled in her hiding-place and shivered, wondering what she had better do, she saw the Electoral Prince with his drawn sword in his hand spring from the room to the terrace and run madly down the steps. He was hotly followed by one whom she knew to be Prince Karl, and a few seconds later she saw the Elector himself, heavy though he was, running like a lad in the tracks of his predecessors. All three went tearing across the lawn in the direction of the pavilion and were soon out of sight. Then, while she held both her hands to her bosom to control the beating of her heart, three more men poured out of the open window, fiercely chasing the previous fugitives, and then, on their heels, came a woman, running like a nymph. Something was evidently going on at the pavilion,

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and Melusine was resolved to see it, come what consequences might come. So she girdled her gown about her as well as she could, and set off running, too, with the best speed her fulness of flesh allowed, in the wake of the running woman. As she staggered and panted through the darkness towards the neighborhood of the pavilion she was startled and spurred by the clatter of steel against steel and angry clamor as of challenging adversaries. With her large heart in her large mouth, Melusine gave a spurt to her flagging energies and reached, sweating and breathless, the wide clearing about the pavilion, to find it the theatre of strange deeds and peopled by a strange audience.

XXXII

AT THE PAVILION

WHEN John reached the pavilion he found it all muffled in darkness. For a moment he paused, uncertain; then he ascended the steps and listened. All seemed still within, as if its occupants had retired to rest, yet John knew from his letter that he was expected, and as he stood there he could hear the stroke of twelve booming from the distant town. He tapped lightly at the door and listened again, and it seemed to his strained senses as if the silence within grew more profound. Then he tapped again a little louder, and now he felt strangely conscious that there was some one behind that denying door standing very still and holding breath. Again he tapped, and this time his summons met with a response. A voice from within, which he knew to be the voice of Swanhild, came to him, asking in a low tone that was swayed by terror and anxiety, "Who is there?"

"I, John O'Hagan," John made answer, and then he heard the sound of a drawn bolt, and the door opened and Swanhild faced him. The hall was darkened, but she was holding a lantern in her hand, and he could read care and alarm upon her pale face,

AT THE PAVILION

though the alarm was fading now that she knew who the visitor was. "What do you want?" she whispered, between scarcely parted lips. John looked at her in surprise.

"I come for the Princess," he said. "Is anything amiss?"

Swanhild shook her head.

"Do you bring bad news?" she gasped.

John was puzzled.

"Is the Princess still here?" he asked, and when Swanhild had nodded assent, "Bring me to the Princess," he commanded.

Swanhild shut and bolted the pavilion door and led him by the dim light of the lantern up silent stairs and darkling corridors. She whispered him caution as they walked.

"The servants are all abed. Most of them are away on holiday. Tread softly, for Heaven's sake!"

In silence they paused before a door. Swanhild opened it. It was dimly lit with candles within, and John, entering, found himself in the company of Dorothea and his brother Philip. They were busy getting papers together and putting them into a small box. As the door opened they both looked up and started to see the unexpected form of John.

"I heard a tapping at the door," Swanhild explained, breathlessly, "and opened it and found Monsieur O'Hagan outside. He asked to see you."

Then she withdrew and closed the door behind her. Dorothea was holding to a table for support and

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trembling violently. Philip advanced towards John anxiously.

"Has anything happened?" he asked.

John stared at him, wondering.

"Nay," he said, "that is what you must tell me. Has anything happened?"

Dorothea, steadying herself against the table, forced herself to speak.

"Why have you come?" she asked, and Philip echoed her almost unconsciously with, "Why have you come?"

"Why have I come?" John repeated. "Because you sent for me, Princess." And even as Dorothea shook her head, and Philip stared in wonder from the one to the other, John put his hand into his coat-pocket and produced a piece of paper, which he handed to Dorothea. "You sent me this," he said, but even as he said the words he began to be troubled with all manner of horrid doubts. Dorothea took the paper mechanically, glanced at it, and then turned to John with troubled eyes.

"I never sent you this," she declared, and as she spoke she handed the paper to Philip, who read it with a frowning face. "I never wrote that. My hand is very well feigned, but I never wrote those words."

Each of the three saw consternation painted on the drawn faces of the others.

"What does it mean?" asked Philip.

John answered him, quickly.

AT THE PAVILION

"It means some kind of mischief; bothered if I know what kind."

"Are we betrayed?" Dorothea gasped.

John shook his head.

"I think not," he answered, confidently. "Some way or other," he said, turning to Philip, "I believe they still think I am you, and this is some unexpected trap to snare me as you. But whatever it is, you had better be off. Are you ready to go?"

"Quite ready," said Philip, quietly. "The boat is moored hard by; on the opposite bank our little company awaits us. If you had come five minutes later you would not have found us here."

"Then be off now," said John, "as if the devil was after you. You came in by the front door?" he said, questioning Philip. Philip nodded. "Then you had better go out by a back door. If the place is being watched, it is being watched for me. I do not think you will be troubled. Have you any help at hand?"

"Half a dozen men are on this side of the river," Philip answered, "waiting by the boat."

"Good," said John. "Once across you may believe yourselves in safety."

"Truly," said Philip, with the ghost of a smile. "We are mounted on horses of Duke Wolfram's breeding that go like the wind. Fifty market-carts have just been upset on the bridge and make it impassable for long enough."

John approved with his eyes. "Well done, little Philip." He went to the door, and, opening it, called

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Swanhild, who came into the room, looking very pale and steadfast. "Time to be moving, my dears."

Dorothea advanced towards John and held out her hand with an air half of command, half of appeal.

"You will come with us," she said.

John shook his head very decisively.

"My business is to wait here," he said, "and to see that you get a fair start."

"You may be in danger," Dorothea said, anxiously.

Philip said nothing, but watched his brother with admiring eyes.

"Your highness," said John, quietly, "my brother and I have been in danger all our lives, and we have got pretty well used to it by this time. But it is you that will be in danger if you delay much longer. Philip, take her away. I will look after this end of the adventure."

Dorothea stifled a little cry and caught up the box into which she had been putting the papers.

Philip advanced towards John and caught his hand.

"Good-bye, best of brothers, best of comrades," he said. John wrung his hand. Dorothea turned to him a tearful face.

"Sir," she said, "you are a gallant gentleman and a good friend. May God bless you."

She held out her hand, and John, swiftly kneeling, kissed it.

"God bless you, sweet Princess," he prayed, "and send you happy days." He rose to his feet and turned to his brother. "Quick, Philip, quick."

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As the others turned to leave him his glance fell upon a hunting trophy in a corner of the room. He went to it, and from among the knives and boar-spears took down a hunting-horn, which he handed to Philip.

"When you are safe ashore," he said, "sound me a pretty point of war on that plaything, and I shall know that you are safe."

Philip nodded.

John went on: "Good. Be off with you. If any come here I will keep them in play till I hear your signal."

Philip turned to Dorothea.

"Come, madame," he said, and offered her his arm, for she was still trembling. Then Philip and the Princess, with Swanhild silently carrying the lantern at their heels, went out of the room, and quitting the pavilion by a back door sped swiftly to the river-gate. When they were gone, John burned the false letter in the flame of one of the candles. Then taking a candle in his hand, and blowing out the rest, he made his way to the hall. Setting the candle on a table, he cautiously unbolted the door. Then he blew out the candle and noiselessly stepped into the night.

He stood for a while on the top of the steps, plunged in thought as deep as the darkness around him. What, he asked himself, was the meaning of the false message which had brought him to the pavilion, and why had no attempt been made to stay the escape of the Princess? It seemed clear that whoever was conspiring directly against the Princess, and incidentally

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against him, knew nothing of the proposed evasion, was not meeting plot with counterplot, but was digging a mine of his own for the destruction of Dorothea. The purpose of the plotters might be, must be, to lure him to the pavilion under conditions compromising to the honor of the Princess. In that case it was very plain that he would not be allowed to leave the pavilion unseen, or, probably, unimpeded. While he peered into the darkness all around him, the sinister, grimacing figure of the drunken Swede came into his mind. Gustav Brandt counted for something in this business, counted for what?

Straining his sense of hearing he seemed to catch faint sounds of movements in the gardens below him. He knew that where he stood he was almost invisible. Cautiously he drew his sword and held it ready under the cover of his cloak; dexterously he swung some folds of the cloak around his left arm to serve as a sort of shield. Then softly whistling a Jacobite air he descended the steps.

Instantly five shadows sprang from a lurking-place in the shrubbery and charged him with drawn swords. Their aim was to keep together, but one was quicker than the others, and John ran him through the body before he had time to realize that his quarry was ready and weaponed. Another stumbled over the fallen man, and John stabbed him in the shoulder as he fell. The remaining three came to a moment's halt, which John took advantage of to step back a few paces and place his back against one of the pilasters of the

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balustrade. It was one to three now, and he had known worse odds. "Damnation," he heard one of his adversaries ejaculate, and he recognized the guttural accents of Brandt.

"Good-evening, Captain Brandt," John called out, mockingly. "What is the meaning of this foolery?"

Brandt's answer came back to him thickly, hoarse with rage and hate.

"It means, my fine fellow, that those who kiss princesses must pay for their pleasures. I saw you go in, my bird of beauty, but you will find it harder to get out."

Knowledge came to John with Brandt's words. Brandt had not seen him go in, for he had seen Brandt on his way to the palace before John had got to the pavilion. Brandt must have seen Philip enter and taken him for John. Then the plan of escape was not known. But who was backing Brandt in this business? Prince Max, no doubt. And the rogue Brandt had been singing a loose love-song of success. Madame von Lutten was in it.

These thoughts flashed very swiftly through John's mind, for he was not given much time for thinking. Brandt and his two blackguards charged him again, but John was not one of the best swordsmen in Europe for nothing. This time he wounded one man in the side and Brandt himself in the thigh, and the three recoiled again. John was gaining time for the fugitives, and was as blithe as blithe. So far he had not had a scratch. But in the last rally he had not

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disabled any of his antagonists, and by this time the man who had fallen had picked himself up, and, after ascertaining that his hurt was not serious, had rejoined his comrades. So John had still four to one against him. As for his first assailant, the stroke had done for him; he was out of the melley.

The four men came on again with a rush, but they could not take John unawares, placed as he now was, and they could not get within his guard. John's sword seemed everywhere, meeting their blades as if the thin steel had a living instinct. A second man fell with a thrust in the throat and lay and troubled John no more. Indeed, he was unwittingly of service to his intended victim, for as he fell he stretched full length between John and his antagonists and served as a rampart of a kind against their rush. They would have to leap over him or come around him, and either course was disconcerting to them and advantageous to their quarry.

But though John had diminished the odds against him as far as numbers went, he was not now unscathed. Brandt had given him a wound which might have been worse, but which was bad enough, for it was in the shoulder of the sword-arm, and it bled freely and John felt it harder to handle his weapon. This was what Brandt had hoped for, and once again exultantly he bade his assassins charge. The body of the dead rascal was in their path, hampering their freedom of assault, so Brandt ordered one of his fellows to drag it aside while he and the

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other kept John in play. Sure that John was practically disabled, Brandt came driving at him from the right, while his partner assailed John on the left. John let them come, with hanging arm and trailing sword; once while they still were some little way off he made as if to lift his blade. and then let it droop again. "Hurrah," cried Brandt, who saw the action and judged John helpless, "hurrah!" and came driving at him. But John was as skilled as Philip in every trick of sword-play. In a flash he passed his sword from his right to his left hand, and before Brandt could recover from his surprise at encountering John's steel as steady as ever against his own, John transfixing his breast, and he dropped like a log. It was John's turn to cry "Hurrah!" He had but two assailants left, and on these he turned the tables by charging them. One retreated, and John was hard at it with the other, a stubborn fellow that did not suffer himself to be disconcerted by John's left-handed attack, when the garden was suddenly loud with noise and alive with running figures.

Assailants and assailed paused in astonishment to behold a confused crowd of men and women come running down the glade that joined the park with the gardens of the pavilion, while at the same moment a number of the Palace Guard, carrying torches and led by von Lutten, issued from the side-path that was nearest to the guard-house, and lit up with the light of their flambeaux the blood-stained field of fight.

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The first to reach the arena of battle was Prince Max. Running to within a few feet of John, he screamed out to von Lutten, "Arrest that villain," and in an instant John was seized, disarmed, and held prisoner by several of the guard, to whom, indeed, John offered no resistance.

By this time the Elector was by the side of rabid Max, so also was Prince Karl, while a little in the background the other members of that strange stampede, men and women, drew together and looked with pale, amazed faces on one another and on the strange scene. There were some queer seconds of silence, which the Elector was the first to break.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked, angrily of John, and indicated with a sweep of his arm the trampled grass, the fallen bodies, and the two surviving assassins, now securely held by soldiers of the guard.

"Your highness," John answered, composedly, "I have been set upon by assassins within the confines of your park. Who has done this thing?"

Prince Max wrenched himself from the controlling clasp of his brother.

"Sire," he gasped, "this rascal was tracked to the pavilion, secretly visiting my wife. You saw him enter?"

He turned to where Madame von Lutten stood, apart and alone, smiling horribly like a fury upon the havoc she had wrought. The woman nodded her head grimly. Then something strange came to pass.

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One of the men that lay for dead upon the sward lifted himself with pain and crawled a little nearer to the Elector. It was Brandt, the Swedish adventurer.

"I saw him enter," he cried, with a dying voice, "so I waited till he came out and avenged the honor of my Prince."

He fell on his face as he spoke and lay still. John shrugged his shoulders. He was wondering how soon he should hear the sound of the horn.

"Take him away and have him looked to," the Elector commanded, pointing to Brandt, and while some of the soldiers set themselves to the removal of Brandt's body, and the bodies of the others, the Elector turned to von Lutten.

"Summon the Princess," he said. Prince Max caught at the words and echoed them.

"Summon the Princess! Ay. Drag the jade hither that she may confess her shame on her knees before her paramour."

He would have made a rush for the pavilion as he spoke, but Prince Karl held him back by sheer superiority of strength. The two Englishmen and the Frenchman huddled close together in silent observation, saw von Lutten majestically ascend the steps and knock solemnly with his gold-headed stick at the door. There was no answer, and he knocked again. There was no answer when he knocked a third time. The sound of his summoning blows seemed to ring hollowly through the night.

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"She will not come," screamed Prince Max, "she dare not come; the jade is afraid of her shame."

John, quietly passive in the hands of those that held him prisoner, looked at Prince Max as if he were some poisonous reptile that it were no more than honest to crush. Lifting his eyes he suddenly encountered the gaze of Madame von Lutten fixed steadily upon him in a stare of hateful triumph, and he sickened at the sight. Plainly she was the enemy, she was the devil of the hideous play.

The Elector called to von Lutten to have the door broken open, and in obedience to a sign several of the guard ran up the steps, and with repeated blows of the stocks of their muskets forced the doors to yawn and give them entrance.

"Bring out the Princess," the puzzled Elector now commanded von Lutten, and immediately von Lutten, followed by the soldiers and certain torch-bearers, rushed into the pavilion, and their heavy steps could be heard trampling up-stairs and scampering along corridors and rushing into rooms. John, smiling ironically at the ineffectuality of the attempts, suddenly saw two women waiting a little way apart from the group of watching men. One stood erect, with her eyes fixed on him; the other, huddled on her knees, was crying piteously. The weeping girl was Melusine von Ehrenberg; the rigid figure was the English girl, whose fan-ribbon lay anigh his heart. He saw that her face was very pale and set in the torch-light, and he wondered what she

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would think, and wished that he could tell her the truth.

In a few minutes more the noisy feet that had trampled up the stairs of the pavilion came trampling down them again, and it was a very flustered, bewildered von Lutten who came hurrying down the steps and advanced towards the Elector.

"Your highness," he gasped, "the princess is not in the pavilion; there is no one in the pavilion except a couple of stupid servants."

"Not in the pavilion?" bellowed the Elector. "Not in the pavilion?" screamed Prince Max, who, extricating himself from the relaxed grasp of Prince Karl, sped up the steps in a passion of baffled revenge. Those outside could hear him ranging from room to room and screaming Dorothea's name furiously. Presently he returned, haggard, gasping, his red face wet with sweat.

"She is not there!" he cried to the Elector; "she is not there!" Then he turned towards John and asked, furiously, "You villain, where is she?"

Even at that moment there came from far away, very clear in the quiet of the night, the sturdy sound of a horn, blowing a point of war. All listened in amaze and then all looked at John in amaze, for he was swaying with great gusts of laughter that seemed strangely contrasted with the grimness of the happening things.

"Prince," cried John, when he had tasted enough of laughter, "you may whistle for your wife. She is

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out of your reach now, God be praised! The O'Hagan is taking her to her father's house."

John's speech thrilled and troubled his hearers; most of all, it puzzled the Elector.

"What madness is this?" he asked; "to say that she is with the Chevalier O'Hagan, while you stand here our prisoner."

John laughed again, very heartily.

"I mean what I say, no less," he asserted, cheerfully.

Prince Max came close to him, foaming.

"What do you mean?" he shrieked, beside himself with baffled passion. "You dog, you beast, what do you mean?"

John nodded his head complacently.

"Be easy, now," he answered, mocking. "You are a pretty devil, Prince Max, and it's just possible, though I won't say it's likely, that you might have got the better of one O'Hagan. But the devil himself couldn't hope to get the better of two O'Hagans."

Prince Max fell back a pace and steadied himself with the point of his drawn sword. His face was working horridly and he gabbled, inarticulately.

"What do you mean, sir," said the Elector, sternly, "with your talk of two O'Hagans?"

"Just what I say," replied John, defiantly. "I took brother Philip's place in Schlafingen while brother Philip rode to Sonnenburg to save an unhappy lady."

"Do you expect us to believe this miracle—" the

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Elector began, angrily, when he was interrupted. Lady Bodmor ran down the slope to his side.

"It is true," she cried; "it is true. This gentleman is John O'Hagan, and my old friend."

There was silence for a moment. The Englishman looked at his wife with a grave tenderness on his face. Monsieur de la Vigerie smiled faintly, for this explained many things that had puzzled him. Mr. Banbury proffered information.

"I always knew, your highness, that there were two brothers of the name of O'Hagan. But one of them was supposed to be dead."

Madame von Lutten dropped with a groan on the grass and lay in a swoon. Nobody heeded her.

Prince Max reeled forward again, his eyes glaring as he screamed, with twitching lips:

"What does it matter how this dog is named? Send after the others; drag them back. It is a hanging matter for the man, and as for the woman, well, it will be bad for the woman."

"Your highness," said John, quietly, to the Elector, ignoring the Electoral Prince—"your highness may take my assurance that you will waste your time in pursuit. For one thing, the party are mounted on the famous horses of Duke Wolfram's breeding. For another thing, you would find it a little hard to get across your bridge in a hurry."

This last statement was confirmed by von Lutten, who had just learned from a hot-foot messenger of the barricaded condition of the bridge, which barred

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direct pursuit. He, however, assured the Elector that the work of clearance would go rapidly forward. John laughed as he listened.

"If they get the bridge clear in an hour they will be pretty fellows, and by that time Beauty, God bless her! will be safe from the Beast, devil damn him!"

"Devil damn you," screamed Prince Max, and leaped at him with his sword raised and pierced him in the breast.

Two women screamed as if the stroke had struck them when John fell forward on his knees. The men stood for a moment motionless, fixed by the horror of the deed, and in that moment the deed was avenged by its victim. John was on his feet in an instant, had flung himself upon the Electoral Prince, wrenched his sword from his grasp, and driven the weapon into his heart. Before any man could lay hands upon either of them the combatants had fallen apart—Max lying dead one way and John lying dying another.

Lord Bodmor, Banbury, and la Vigerie sprang forward to protest against any further attack upon O'Hagan, but the Elector, raising his hand, restrained their advance and motioned back those whom von Lutten was ordering to seize the prisoner. Lady Bodmor knelt by the side of her friend. The Elector turned towards Prince Karl, and for the first time the strangers that looked upon his face saw dignity and honor there, and realized that he had once been a soldier and a hero. "Son Karl," he said, firmly,

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“you are now the Electoral Prince. I hope you will do better than your predecessor.”

“He looked,” wrote Mr. Banbury later, “like some noble Roman while he spoke.”

John looked up at the girl who bent over him, and smiled faintly.

“Heaven made me,” he said, “to serve pretty ladies by getting rid of ugly gentlemen. There is nothing to cry about; only a soldier of fortune the less.”

He glanced down at the grass that was reddened with his blood and repeated the famous phrase, “Would to God that this blood were shed for Ireland!”

He was silent for an instant, then “Give me your hand,” he said, and when he got it went on, in a fading voice, “it is good to hold your hand again, dear.” So he died.

Mr. Banbury records that the Electress was still asleep among her frightened women when the body of Prince Max was carried to the palace.

EPILOGUE

FOR much of this story we depend upon the evidence of Count Wolfram of Felzen-Littover. Unfortunately, Count Wolfram, who had an intimacy with most and an acquaintance with, or at least a knowledge of, all concerned, chose for some fantastical reason to cast his fluent familiarity in the amazing mould of an allegorical romance. Thus, under the drive of his iron pen, the familiar geographical regions of Sonnenburg and Schlafingen become strange Arcadian principalities, recklessly baptized by an imperfect classical memory. He chooses for some inexplicable reason to make his Dorothea a pseudo-Grecian princess, and to call her Galatea; an illustrious gentleman of my race is made to figure as Miltiades, while the liquorish, boorish, brutal Prince Max veils his infamy under the alias of Sporax. But, for all that, Count Wolfram knew what he was talking about—or writing about—and his sham Grecian masquerade is still the fountain-head. The Banbury papers in the Record Office are full of matter. The Memoirs of Lady Banbury (born Swanhild von Eltze), which have never been published, throw light on one side of the story. The some-

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what meagre and unsatisfactory volume, *Chronicles of the Irish in the Service of France*, by Brian O'Brian (Amsterdam, 1730), sheds a faint illumination upon the other. The evidence at the inquest on Thomas Gunn, Esquire, of Langton, in Buckinghamshire, has had its value, and Lord Bodmor's rather solemn and pompous, but always sound and honorable, *Memoirs*, have helped materially to correct hurriedly formed impressions. The narrative of Major McCann, of the Austrian army, tells in detail of Philip's scheme of rescue. But apart from a thousand hints, allusions, statements, and denials to be found in the anecdotes and reminiscences of the time, apart from such special documents as sleep, seldom troubled from their dust, in the archives of certain public chancelleries and private libraries, Count Wolfram's romance, with all its faults, must be recognized as the mainstay of our story.

In the romance, as in the reality, Philip married Dorothea, and the pair lived many honorable and happy years in Rome, where they died and lie buried. In the romance, as in the reality, Madame von Lutten died mad soon after the tragic events at the pavilion, believing herself to the end to be visited by two large ravens, one of whom she always addressed as Max and the other as Philip. In the romance, as in the reality, Prince Karl soon succeeded to the Electorate, married, and made a good ruler and father. Count Wolfram's romance has nothing to say about Lord Bodmor or Mr. Banbury, but neither needed the

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omission. The Bodmors understood each other, may be said to have loved each other, and were content. As for Sir James Banbury—he succeeded to the baronetcy in the early years of the eighteenth century—he always maintained and always believed that his Diana, his Will-o'-the-Wisp, his Swanhild, was the most wonderful, most beautiful, most adorable woman in the world.

THE END



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